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WORD BALLOONS

Long Time Passing

Frankly speaking, if I had read Marvel's *S.H.I.E.L.D.* mini-series earlier, you probably wouldn't be reading about any new *S.H.I.E.L.D.* book elsewhere in this issue.

Comics, you see, tend to pile up in my apartment. They have their own corner, where the unread ones tower in pillars stretching longingly for the ceiling. When I get the time, I snatch and devour all I haven't read of certain titles, often racing through six, eight, even 12 consecutive issues. And that's what (of course) happened with the six-volume *S.H.I.E.L.D.* mini-series published last spring.

I'm a big fan of Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.—the James Bond fad-spawned creation which graced *Strange Tales* and its own title in the '60s. Originated by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby (of course), *Nick Fury* was most fully realized by writer/artist Jim Steranko, who took over about a year into its run. Boy, do I remember those comics! I can tell you just which individual newsstands and 7-Elevens I bought almost every issue at. Curiously, years later, I even worked for the very same Jim Steranko while on the editorial staff of his magazine, *Mediascene Prevue*.

So, it was some anticipation that months after their publication, I finally sat down to read the entire *S.H.I.E.L.D.* mini-series. When I got up, I wasn't so pleased. Sure, it's sort of entertaining, nicely illustrated, but. . . very disturbing. It seems that in order to "streamline" and rebuild the title, several longtime agents of *S.H.I.E.L.D.*—favorite old heroes to us—get unceremoniously killed off. Gone are Jimmy Woo, Clay Quatermain, Jasper Sitwell, Eric Koenig and (no!) the Gaffer. And just to make sure we understand the irony, it's carefully explained that the entire superspy organization (and thus Nick Fury's whole heroic life) has been mostly based on a tissue of lies.

Well, well, well. This doesn't make me angry. It only makes me sad. For the sake of a few not-terribly-pivotal story points, *five* admittedly non-major heroes must die.

I don't quarrel with the creative team's license to kill (they are, presumably, just trying to tell a good story). Friends of mine have scripted similar deaths of characters; I understand their reasons why. And sure, I know I can relive the real Nick Fury missions any time I want. They're in my bookcase. Yes, I know these are only fictional characters, nobody really died. But here's my point—*was this really necessary?*

We're awash in death. It haunts our real lives, dodging at us from the shadows and laughing at us in the grim statistics of the nightly newscasts. With all that in mind, I wonder, do we need our fictional heroes to keep biting the big one? Are we having fun yet? Hey, kids, is this entertainment?

I must admit that *S.H.I.E.L.D.*, the spark that ignited my grief, merely represents one in a continuing series of relatively recent heroic deaths in comics and other media. There are (apparently) good reasons aplenty for these passings: to allow for new characters with the same names, to eliminate heroes who seem somehow passe, to explain actor's exits, to provide provocative plots and publicity.

The necrology is impressive: various agents of The Shadow (in Howard Chaykin's *Blood & Judgment*). . . Lt. Tasha Yar of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. . . Robin (i.e. Jason Todd), killed by reader dial-in demand. . . Pilot of *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future*. . . Supergirl and the Flash (Barry Allen) and the Losers and many others (in *Crisis on Infinite Earths*). . . and a longtime hero from the James Bond film series created by Ian Fleming himself and scheduled to die in this summer's 007 flick.

There are countless others. Some more important, but others, not. And, I'll grant you, maybe some, maybe most of those characters didn't really matter. Still, *every* death of a hero diminishes us, every death of a hero in this unending series becomes more like everyday gritty reality than the escapist entertainment we crave. So, say goodbye to Jimmy Woo and Pilot and James Bond's pal. Welcome to the reality of heroic fiction.

Sure, it's only a movie. Yeah, it's only a comic book. And those folks, no matter how minor or silly or out-of-date, were only our heroes. But not any more.

—David McDonnell/Editor

COMICS SCENE RETURNS in two months. Expect further looks behind-the-scenes of the **Batman** movie. . . the conclusion of our two-part profile of **Bob Kane**, the man behind the bat. . . and an exclusive, in-depth view of the making of **The Return of Swamp Thing**. There's all this and a great many surprises in **COMICS SCENE #7, on sale April 25, 1989.**

LETTERING

Personal replies are impossible. Other fans & advertisers may contact readers whose letters are printed here. To **avoid** this, mark your letter "Please Withhold My Address." Otherwise, we retain the option to publish your address. Write:
COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue South, 8th Floor,
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Correction: A byline was inadvertently left off a story last issue. It's Bob Miller who wrote the Beany & Cecil *piece. We regret the omission.*

Photo: Courtesy The Mike Douglas Show

WANTED!?? MORE HEROES LIKE THIS DYNAMIC DUO. That's the caped crusader (allegedly Jackie Leonard) carrying the head of Mike Douglas. The boy wonder (the late Wally Cox) isn't sure whether this is a scene from *ALIEN, A Nightmare on Elm Street Part 2* or *Re-Animator*.

. . . In COMICS SCENE #5, almost everyone in the letters column verbally abused Michael Keaton. C'mon. I believe the man deserves a chance. Don't crucify him until you've seen the movie. Remember, "Innocent until proven guilty," and "Don't judge a book by its cover."

After reading those letters, I was mad at the fact that these dungheads weren't willing to give Keaton a chance to prove himself.

They referred to Mr. Mom or *Johnny Dangerously*. What about *Clean and Sober*? In that film, he proved that he could play a serious role and play it well. He wants to further his career as an actor by getting out of doing only comedy and instead playing more dramatic roles, such as The Batman.

So, fear not, Michael Keaton, I for one stand in your defense and curse all those who stand against you.

Alan Wases
181 Merlin Drive
Athens, GA 30606

. . . Speaking as an avid Batman fan for many years, I feel that I must express my shock and concern over the choice of Michael Keaton to portray the Caped Crusader in the upcoming film.

Michael Keaton is a fine comic actor who has proven himself capable of a serious role in his film *Clean and Sober*, but nevertheless he still retains, at least in my eye, a reputation for comedic acting.

Another objection I have towards Keaton is that he's the wrong physical body type to play Batman/Bruce Wayne. Think back to the success that Christopher Reeve enjoyed in 1978, in the first, and still the best, *Superman*. Reeve was a young unknown actor who happened to have the lean, chiseled features of the Man of Steel, along with the ability to play the dual role of Clark Kent/Superman so well.

This is what I feel Batman should be like in the new movie: He should be young, perhaps in his mid-20s to early-30s. He should have the physical muscularity to live up to a movie version of Batman, not too huge or too small, but a muscular version somewhere between the two extremes. This actor should be able to perform at least some of the obvious stunts that would be part of a Batman movie, which requires a large amount of agility and skill.

As to Batman's appearance on screen, I feel he should have the sharp and lean features of a young Clint Eastwood, or even a Christopher Reeve. This actor should also be able to project a believable image of the rich and bored playboy, the handsome Bruce Wayne, who will obviously be in the story somehow. Bruce Wayne should be played with a sense of fidelity and grace, along with suaveness and a so-called "devil-may-care" attitude, for this is a man with a secret to hide.

Putting Michael Keaton in this role will be a deadly mistake, I fear; he doesn't have the physical height or build for the part, his face is simply too round and boyish-looking to be accepted as the face of the cowled Batman, a being meant to inspire fear in criminals, not laughter.

And Keaton's comic reputation will precede him in this movie, which I fear will be destroyed by campy humor.

While I'm on the subject of campy humor, I would like to say a few words about the choice of Jack Nicholson to play the Joker. For anyone unacquainted with the comic book version of the Joker, he is pictured as a tall and lean man with an equally long and thin face. The Joker should be played as the murderous, insane and yet charismatic lunatic he is in the books and not the giggling clown as he was seen on TV.

I feel that Nicholson is capable of presenting this image of dangerous insanity superbly, but with his reputation for outlandish roles, this part will be too obvious for him. I also think that he is too short and paunchy to play the part believably for all the Batman fans to accept. My choice for the ideal actor to play the Joker is and always will be the very elegant and versatile Peter O'Toole. He could be the spitting image of the Joker when he puts on the makeup.

Dennis Kininger
1307 Utica Street
Oris Kany, NY 13424

. . . So far, my favorite part of your magazine is the movie section. I always enjoy reading about the various movies in production as well as the Comics Screen in back. Friends of mine who don't collect regularly always ask to see it.

While reading over the list in issue four, I couldn't help but gather a few comments. I am tickled pink that we will finally see a Batman movie. I only pray it will treat Batman right. Speaking of the Batmovie, I simply cannot come up with anyone better suited to play the Joker than Jack Nicholson! The more I think about it, the more I like it! However, I was originally less than thrilled with the choice of Michael Keaton as Batman/Bruce Wayne, but as I thought a bit, I really started to like it. Keaton does possess a certain quality that I've always liked. Given his recent performance in *Clean and Sober*, I think he may be well-suited for the more serious *Batman* movie. Time will tell.

Moving on; is it just me or does a Captain America Broadway musical sound rather silly?

Many characters such as Blackhawk, Doc Savage, Plastic Man, etc. have very little about their respective movies mentioned. Is it possible for some sort of sidebar article on these projects? I would certainly like to know more. A sort of update would be a

perfect complement to Comics Screen.

Reading about the proposed Mr. Magoo flick; I challenge *anyone* to think of someone better to play Magoo than George Burns. George Burns. Think about it.

Benjamin Scuglia
147 West Prospect Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15205

Burns as Magoo? Could be. As to your question, we update our Comics Screen every issue—and we publish all information available on each project. It, by the way, is one of our favorite things, too.

. . . I realize Michael Keaton may not seem like the most likely candidate to play Batman, but I think people are jumping the gun a little bit by deciding that the new *Batman* movie won't be worthy of the character. After all, Warner Bros. didn't sign Mr. Mom or Beetlejuice to portray Batman; they signed Michael Keaton, a fine actor who gave a brilliant dramatic performance in *Clean and Sober*. People also fail to realize that Hollywood is the land of illusion. Just because Keaton isn't 6'4" and has a receding hairline, it doesn't mean that he'll appear that way in the film. Christopher Reeve was said to be a "stringbean" when he was chosen to play Superman. But after many rigorous training sessions, he ultimately became the definitive screen version of the Man of Steel.

Now I can't say this will be the definitive *Batman* movie until I've seen it, but until anyone else has seen it, *who* can say it won't be?

Craig B. Mote
1578 Covent Road
Troy, OH 45373

. . . Obviously, some "critics" have not seen *Clean and Sober*. For if they had, they would have started their letters to COMICS SCENE quite differently. "Michael Keaton is obviously an accomplished comedian, 'not a serious actor.'" If that is how they picture him, their picture is wrong.

I believe the producers and director of *Batman: The Movie* have viewed *Clean and Sober* and made the best possible choice for the character of Bruce Wayne, The Batman. Yes, an athlete or gymnast would be a better choice, for the body, but not the skill of acting. Their assumption that Adam West would have been a better choice because Michael Keaton will ruin the film is *totally* off-base. They say the movie will fail because of poor box office and loss of the Batman legion. Well, if that legion includes people who'll only go to see a musclebound goon beat on a clown, I don't wish to be part of it.

Jason Kimble
Address Withheld

. . . I read about the controversy surrounding the *Batman* film. Certain heavy elements of the script were mentioned. Now, I wish to make it clear that I have respect for the original *Bátman* fans of the comic-book days. However, I think I speak for many when I say that the most remembered Batman is from the classic 1960s TV show with Adam West and Burt Ward. This is the Batman we all know and love so much. We do not need a serious, melodramatic, or violent Batman film to help ruin the legend—no matter who's doing the script, starring or directing. At the very least, the film need not be funny so much as *fun* to watch.

Michael Schilling
1917 August Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21222

. . . I'm hearing a lot of talk about how bad the *Batman* movie will be, and I'm getting tired of it.

How many of these people ever heard of "with the benefit of a doubt?" If *any* of these people go into the movie thinking it will be terrible, they probably won't enjoy it.

Although I have a few problems with Sam Hamm's script (as seen in CS #3), I'm sure I will *still* enjoy the film.

Maybe Keaton and Nicholson were bad choices, but how can you judge the film if you haven't seen it yet?

Breck L. Ray
Address Withheld

. . . As for Sam Hamm's script, I can't see how he's doing an "injustice" to all the loyal Batman fans. One fan complained that his "unmasking" scene and "train" scene (where Batman gets his cape caught in the train door) did not portray Batman as the flawless, invulnerable crimefighter as portrayed in comics. It's my opinion that these scenes add to the movie's realism. Batman is human and vulnerable to mistakes just like the rest of us. It's impossible to do and go through all the things that Batman does and not make a mistake and become hurt in the process. I commend Sam Hamm on giving the character of Batman a more mortal dimension than the one shown in the comics. So try to keep an open mind and not to condemn the movie too quickly. You may be surprised!

Eddie G.
Maspeth, NY

. . . After all that we have heard about the production crew and cast of *Batman* so far, one of this year's hottest-to-be epics, I must confess that I have now a much better feeling about how *Batman* is going to turn out than I had last year, when the info about the movie started flowing out to the public, and nearly everybody was ready to crucify Michael Keaton as Bruce Wayne alias the Caped Crusader.

Come on, folks, give Keaton a fair chance and keep your foolish prejudgments to yourself, or otherwise you are no better than the lot that tried to ban *The Last Temptation of Christ*! I have a feeling that Michael Keaton has really gone in for the role to play it *straight*—reports have stated that he has been pumping iron in order to get into shape, so the physical aspect should at least be in check!—and I believe that he'll give a heck of a surprise to all those who are now taking a doubtful or rejective stand! Honestly, if the diehard loyalty to the very concept of Batman by such experts as Tim Burton, Sam Hamm and Bob Kane, the creator of the Caped Crusader, matters anything, we *will* see a very dramatic portrayal of a millionaire whose mind is obsessed with revenge, and what is most important of all, in order to succeed with this, we will encounter a Michael Keaton who has undergone a complete metamorphosis. Do not let Betelgeuse, Mr. Mom or his other screen personalities harass you longer—he will be our man, he'll be Batman! If Bob Kane feels that he's perfect for the role, then I'm completely at rest and furiously impatient to see the opening night and so should you all, who call yourselves *true* Batman fans. Let your souls be filled with Bat fever instead of gloomy suspicion, rejoice that there will be a seriously made, big-budget *Batman* movie coming out in the first place, and save the Inquisition til' *after* you've seen it!

However, I'm not quite without a few quibbles, as I think that this whole thing is just too good to be true. Firstly, I have a bad feeling about how the costume designer will handle the Batcostume: Whatever you do, Mr. Costume Designer, please don't make it look like a corny rag, but make it *real* and sinister-looking. It doesn't even have to match perfectly with the designs seen in the comic books, as long as it's effective and inspires awe. Remember, what Sam Hamm said about it in CS #3: "Batman's whole gimmick, the only reason to wear the bat costume, is to *frighten* people. In the script, whenever anyone sees *Batman*, their first impulse is to shoot him." Well, probably we already know how the much-awaited costume looks like by this time, but I sincerely hope that they have paid extra attention to it, as it's just as important in terms of overall realism as Rob Bottin's *RoboCop* design was for that movie!

Secondly, I have a problem about the choice of Jack Nicholson as The Joker. Undoubtedly Nicholson is an excellent actor and interpreter extraordinaire of diabolical roles, but isn't he perhaps a bit old for the Sam Hamm image of the Joker, which is a fairly young man with a chalk-white complexion and commanding presence? Like Sam Hamm, I would also have preferred Ray Liotta or even Willem Dafoe before Nicholson, but no doubt he will once again deliver a stunning, charismatic performance.

SINCE COMEDIAN MICHAEL KEATON HAS BEEN SIGNED TO PLAY BATMAN IN THE UPCOMING FILM, PRODUCERS ARE ALREADY LOOKING AT OTHER COMEDIANS TO PLAY SUPER-HEROES. HOW ABOUT EDDIE MURPHY AS THOR?...
WITH MY DEATH RAY, I SHALL CAUSE UNTOLD PAIN AND INCONVENIENCE! HA! HA! HA!
THOU ART NOT O-TAY!
BATMAN © DC COMICS
DANA (CHURCH LADY) CARVEY AS WONDER WOMAN?...
I'LL MURDER YA, YA UGLY BROAD!
WE'RE FEELING JUST A LITTLE BIT SUPERIOR, NOW AREN'T WE?
WONDER WOMAN © D.C. COMICS GROUP
DAVID LETTERMAN AS CAPTAIN AMERICA?...
CAP, YOU TRULY ARE A SHINING BEACON OF LIBERTY!!
SHOVE IT, JERK!
CAPTAIN AMERICA, THOR © MARVEL COMICS GROUP
HMMMM....
Art: Mike Fisher

Otherwise, I just hope that Tim Burton has spared the body of Sam Hamm's noirish and psychologically intriguing script despite the late rewrite done by Charles (*Brazil*) McKeown, and will uncompromisingly go in for portraying realism, drama and emotion for the sake of Bob Kane's classic concept, which hitherto has only worked well in the hands of certain American and English comic writers.

Juhani Nurmi
Vaskitie 6 B 21
SF-90250 Oulu 25
Finland

Batfans should note the Bob Kane interview this issue (see page 33) as well as the interview with writer Charles McKeown (see page 69).

COMICS SCENE
GUNS & ROSES
IT'S PERFECT. BRINGS HER FLOWERS AND IF SHE DOESN'T LIKE THEM...SHOOT HER.
WHAT TO WEAR, WHAT TO WEAR...
WHOA, CHECK OUT THE INSPIRED SHOES!
SO THIS IS AMBIDEXTROUS, THE SHOPPING PLANET. BUSY.
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COLORIST RAY MURTAUGH
EDITOR LARRY DOYLE
When the going gets rough, Dreadstar and pals go shopping.

Dreadstar Art: Angel Medina/Sam Grainger/Characters Trademark Jim Starlin

"Dreadstar" Treks

I firmly believe in what Paddy Chayevsky said in *Network*," explains Peter David regarding his new writing chores on the now-monthly *Dreadstar*, "which is, 'We are in the boredom-killing business.' Well, I will be killing a *lot* of boredom in *Dreadstar*."

Issue #41 of *Dreadstar* marked *The Incredible Hulk* scribe's debut on the book, as well as the beginning of many changes for Jim Starlin's (CS #4) creation. "What I'm going to be doing is focusing very much on the characters," David says. "Jim's style on *Dreadstar* was very heavily plot-oriented. All this stuff about the Empirical Galaxy, and this very, *very* complicated political infrastructure. I don't write stories like that, not because they're bad, but just because I don't think I could do them as well. My strength is dialogue and characterization."

However, starting with #42, the first monthly issue, is a new backup series, *Pawns*. Ironically enough, it will be written and drawn by *Dreadstar*'s creator. "In what I think is a tremendous vote of confidence," David states dryly, "Jim Starlin is actually going to be appearing in the book's back pages.

"What I'm doing is setting up a whole bunch of interesting subplots," he adds, beginning with one revolving around the baby delivered at the end of issue #41. "A race of killer turtles wants the baby, because the explosion that caused the baby to be born resulted in the decimation of their planet."

But David expressed fear about the readers' reaction towards his first issue, and with good reason. "I wrote the plot back in May 1988. Then, I read an issue of STARLOG [#136] that had 'Star

Sword Play

"The basic imagery of *Alvar Mayor* is Solomon Kane-ish, very mysterious," describes Chuck Dixon, who is currently translating Argentine creators Carlos Trillo and Enrique Breccia's work for its American debut this March. Mayor, the sword-swinging hero of a projected series of graphic novels from 4Winds, is "the son of a conquistador in South America who turns his back on the Spanish way of life and wanders into the jungles, seeking adventure and wealth. There's a lot of action but there's an undercurrent of mysticism. Also, it's the end of the Incan Empire, but it's the beginning of a new era for South America, too. It really was an epic struggle and a time that most Americans don't know about. And Breccia's artwork is gorgeous. I mean, if you like Frank Miller, David Mazuchelli, those guys, *this* is what you're going to like."

—Daniel Dickholtz

Mayor Art: Enrique Breccia/Courtesy Tim Truman/4Winds Publishing

Trek: The Lost Generation.' I started reading over the scenarios, and I looked at the synopsis for 'The Child,' and had a stroke! I said, 'My God, this is just like my first issue of *Dreadstar*! What a relief this [episode] never got made.' " That relief was short-lived, however; Pocket Books Editor Dave Stern later showed David the script, which had now become the premiere episode for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s second season.

"As [with] *The Next Generation*, the baby will age at a rapid rate," says David. "The thing is, the baby's growth is not the main plotline. It's basically a new character who's introduced, and it's something that is occurring, which is a big difference from, 'Let's do something about an accelerating baby.' I mean, Skeevo's also growing a beard in the course of the series, but you don't do a whole story on Skeevo's beard."

Also, David intends to reveal some of the mysteries shrouding Iron Angel's past, including what's under that patch on her left (or was it her right?) eye. What else?

"We're going to send them shopping," David says, "because after six months cooped up on the ship in the one outfit each of them owns, they're getting pretty tatty.

"What's basically going to be happening then," David explains, "is that they're going to encounter a deposed monarch who seeks their help in order to regain his monarchy. Dreadstar and company are going to split. Vanth will very much want to help him, and Teuton will naturally do whatever Vanth says. Other members of the company, however, are going to say, 'Well, wait a minute. This guy seems a little strange.'

"I can write a story that has no plot at all," concludes an optimistic Peter David with a laugh, "but I can make it so entertaining, you won't realize it until a day or two later, by which point you already paid your money."

—*Michael McAvennie*

Baker Street Art: By & Copyright 1988 Guy Davis/Courtesy Caliber Press

The Adventure of the Alternate Detective

Fiendish masterminds are at work and only the residents of 221B Baker Street can put an end to their nefarious schemes. But in a London where World War II never happened and zeppelins still fly, desperate clients call on that great detective Sharon Ford, whose roommate, Susan Penderghast, assists her on every case. The game's still afoot, however, but as writer/artist Guy Davis of Caliber Press is discovering, the trail leads every month back to *Baker Street*.

Airboy's back in action against Nazi death.

Air Raid

Eclipse is currently in the midst of publishing the diaries of the Golden Age Airboy in issues #46-49 of his son's series, but unlike most celebrity memoirs that have surfaced of late, these are tinged more with tragedy than steamy scandal.

" 'The Airboy Diaries' were written in a fever where I just got really hyped on doing the story of how Misery captured Valkyrie, the events which led to what we saw the end of in issues #1-5 of the new series," explains Chuck Dixon. "Ernie Colon is doing the artwork and it's gorgeous. He was an Airboy fan when he was a kid and it really shows. It begins just before the German surrender in World War II and goes until New Year's Day 1947. We skip around much more than *Airboy* readers are used to, but we see glimpses of every Air Fighter I could fit in.

"It's a little darker than the usual *Airboy* story," Dixon notes with a laugh, "but *everybody* knows the ending."

—*Daniel Dickholtz*

Airboy Art: Ernie Colon/Copyright 1988 Eclipse Comics

The Knight's Still Young

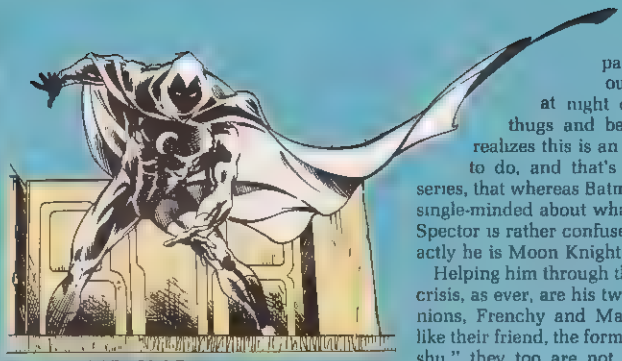
Writing by the light of the silvery moon, Chuck Dixon gets ready to herald a new age for "Moon Knight."

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

Art: Carl Potts/Sal Velluto/Kevin Nowlan

Originally, it was only Marc Spector's physical strength that was affected by the waxing and waning of the Moon. Yet from the frequency with which he appeared and disappeared from newsstands, it seemed that his ability to maintain his own series was similarly affected. Time and again, Moon Knight had entered a number of phases, ranging from his early days hunting a *Werewolf By Night* and battling a fiend's giant chess pieces to suffering from schizophrenia and delving into his mystical Egyptian roots, but each in turn was eventually eclipsed by reader indifference.

"Good work had been done on him," admits Chuck Dixon, the latest scribe to be caught by the lunar avenger's pull, "but for some reason, it just didn't click with the public enough to make it the



Art: Sal Velluto/Mark Farmer

bestseller Marvel thought it should be."

Consequently, when the hero next emerges from the pitch darkness of a new moon as *Marc Spector: Moon Knight*, Dixon will be taking him "back to what Doug Moench and Bill Sienkiewicz started with, which was a street level crime-fighter. The jewelry is gone, the possession of Khonshu is gone, and he's basically relying on his athletic prowess. He'll be more of an international crime-fighter, though, because New York's getting a little crowded with superheroes. He has that whole background of being a mercenary, so the Third World seems to be a place he would be at home."

Also missing this time around will be the multiple personalities the nocturnal nemesis of evil used in his missions before they ultimately overwhelmed him. "He'll *only* be Marc Spector. That's it," Dixon insists. "We've gotten rid of the schizophrenia. That was a really great idea, but we've decided to jettison it in favor of accenting pacing and action. He'll still be a master of disguise, but not always the same specific disguises and he won't be confused over who he is when he wakes up in the morning."

Readers won't have to worry about which book they've picked up, either. Considering the crescent-cloaked combatter of crime's forays into high society as a millionaire playboy, his penchant for symbolic gadgetry and his habit of duelling with outlandish opponents, detractors have found it easy to charge that Moon Knight bears a more than passing resemblance to the competition's own caped crusader, Gotham's grim guardian.

"We're trying to get away from that," Dixon responds. "The powers that be here *didn't* want Marvel's Batman, and I don't perceive it that way at all.

"Marc Spector is by no means Bruce Wayne. He's much more smart-alecky, more prideful. He's not revenge-driven; often, he's simply driven by boredom. I mean, here's a man of action who's used to a fast-paced lifestyle, and suddenly, he's wealthy. And as will be seen early in the series, this seems to frustrate more than help him. Spector is an incredibly rich person, but he can't seem to lay his hands on much cash; his accountants have *everything* tied up. So, rather than delve into the corporate world and be a part of it, he drops out of a helicopter at night on unsuspecting thugs and beats them up. He realizes this is an immature thing to do, and that's the crux of the series, that whereas Batman is very much single-minded about what he does, Marc Spector is rather confused about why exactly he is Moon Knight."

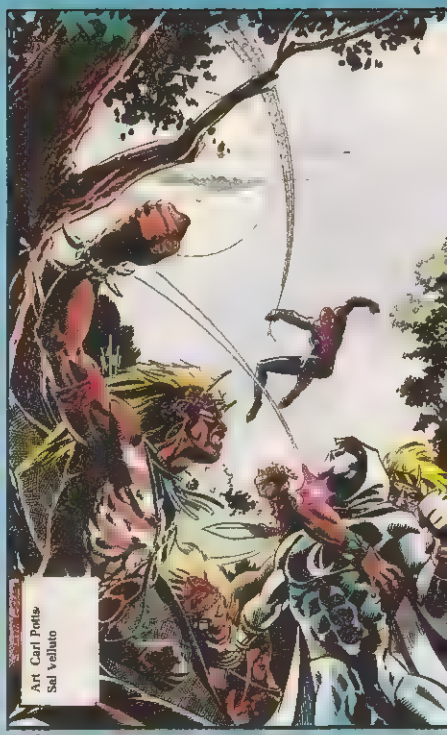
Helping him through this latest identity crisis, as ever, are his two closest companions, Frenchy and Marlena. However, like their friend, the former "Fist of Khonshu," they too are not quite what they once were.

"I didn't like the idea of Frenchy being only a chauffeur wearing that ridiculous livery. This is a macho man of action. This guy wouldn't be caught *dead* in a chauffeur's costume. It was explained before that he was a mercenary, but now we've filled in that he was in the French Foreign Legion and left. I'm also starting to get a handle on how Frenchy and Spector relate to each other, which was never really explored before. Frenchy's a little older than Spector and much more cynical, and he goads Spector constantly, 'This isn't what you should be doing. You're better than this.' Mostly, he's the chopper pilot for the new Moon Copter.

"Marlena is somewhat the same character, but I would like to put more of a toughness on her than she had before. She was too much of a Playboy bunny with a gun," laughs Dixon. "She was just there to be part of Marc Spector's glamorous lifestyle, and I would like to make her more of a partner in the series, make her more self-reliant than she was before. Other than that, there aren't any recurring characters [except] the villains.

"What Bushman wants out of Spector is a final confrontation, a fight to the death," says Chuck Dixon. "We'll see by the end of issue #3 what the outcome of that is."

Art: Sal Velluto



"The most powerful person he'll meet" lends a hand when Spector runs into a few of Bushman's boys.

"I think the readers will like the new Bushman. He looks scarier the way [series penciller] Sal Velluto draws him. He looks more like he can handle Moon Knight than he did before. He also now has his own country in Africa. Bushman is the General of All the Armies and the President for Eternity of Berunda. It's a good job, there's a lot of security and he doesn't have to worry about his retirement. He's now sort of an Idi Amin character and this gives him a base of operations from which he can spread his terror all over the world, but it's *always* directed at Marc Spector. I want to keep Bushman very much Moon Knight's Kingpin or Dr. Doom."

But even if Moon Knight can survive his most memorable menace, he'll find somewhat less familiar foes waiting to challenge him. "Arsenal died in the original series, but I like that idea, so we'll probably see Arsenal back in one form or another. Midnight will be returning, but not in the form that you remember, if *anyone* out there remembers him. Midnight will still look the same, but it *won't* be the same person. And I want to come up with some new villains. In the first two issues are the Glitch Brothers, twins who are computer hackers and dress in matching Hawaiian shirts, sort of the first nerd supervillains. Carl [Potts, the series

(continued on page 52)

All Moon Knight, Punisher, Spider-Man Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989, 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group

THAT GIRLS

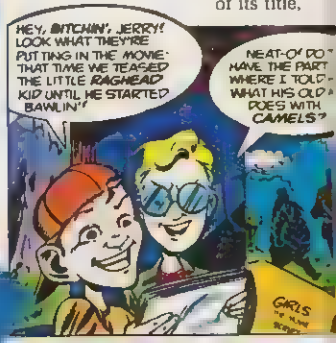
By T.L. JOHNS

Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones keep finding new ways to get into "Trouble."

He fights off the P.L.O., Ugandan agents, a flock of screaming ninjas, saves the world from nuclear destruction, makes love to two of the most beautiful women in the world, and all before breakfast.

Outtakes from the next James Bond movie? The further exploits of Indiana Jones? A Bruce Willis fantasy?

No, it's only a typical issue of Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones' ongoing comic series *The Trouble with Girls*. Despite the double entendre of its title,


HEY, BITCHIN', JERRY! LOOK WHAT THEY'RE PUTTING IN THE MOVIE: THAT TIME WE TEASED THE LITTLE RAGHEAD KID UNTIL HE STARTED BAWLIN'!
NEAT-O! DO YOU HAVE THE PART WHERE I TOLD WHAT HIS OLD MAN DOES WITH CAMELS?
GIRLS

"We've been writing the *Girls* screenplay the way we want to write it," say Jacobs and Jones, sometimes known as the Foster boys.

Art: Tim Hamilton/Colors: Bruce Timm

Trouble is the saga of Lester Girls, a combination of Cary Grant's looks, Indiana Jones' luck, James Bond's magnetism and Elwood P. Dowd's simplicity. In short, the kind of guy men wish they were, women wish they had and villains wish were dead. And after all this, does he bask in the glory of his achievements and fame, the women, the money, the world acclaim? No, he just wants to finish his copy of *The Red Pony*.

In the short time since *The Trouble with Girls* hit the direct sales market, it has garnered impressive critical acclaim, if not exceedingly high volume of sales. In fact, Jacobs calls it "the most borrowed comic book in the world."

Neither Jacobs, 33, nor Jones, 31, got their start in the comic industry. They met while both were working for a used bookstore in San Jose, California in 1978. Shortly thereafter, Crown Publishing released two of their books, *The Beaver Papers*, a parody on what would have happened if the world's greatest authors and filmmakers sent in scripts to *Leave it to Beaver* for its final episodes, and *The Comic Book Heroes*, which Jacobs says they're "pretty embarrassed about." Due to the success of *The Beaver Papers*, they became writers for the humor magazine *National Lampoon* for a few years.

Which leads to the very beginning of Lester Girls. Fans of the comic may be surprised to find out that Lester was originally intended to be a 1982 novel. A few years later, "We started working on it again, but it petered out," relates Jacobs, "and at one point, we decided the novel wasn't the ideal format for it. So, we decided to try it as a comic. Neither of us had ever thought about writing comics but we both *like* comics, so it seemed like a natural medium for it."

They then worked out a proposal and sent it to Eternity Comics, "and the rest is history."

But that history will be taking some unusual turns in the near future. The biggest change will be in the form of a new publishing company. Jacobs and Jones are moving Lester and all of his cohorts—including Apache Dick, Maxie Scoops and his nephews, the Foster boys to Comico. After Eternity's 14th issue, fans will see a new *Trouble with Girls* #1, this time in full color.

"The only big reason is that we couldn't pass up a chance to see the comic book done in color," says Jones. "Eternity isn't equipped to do anything but black and white. And with the color is the hope that we'll reach a wider audience. Black and white comics just don't seem to be regarded very highly these days."

Artist Tim Hamilton will also be joining in their move to Comico. "That was a big priority in our contract," says Jacobs. Jones adds that once color is introduced, *Trouble* will be inked by Chuck (*Hero Sandwich*) Austen.

There will be other changes in store for Lester and friends. While Jacobs says none of us may ever find out who Lester really is, "we will find out more."

"By the time this comes out, we'll have found out that Lester inherited his abilities from his father. That's one big revelation. Then, there's more little stuff we'll use to keep teasing people, for a *long* time," says Jones.

"As to whether we'll truly find out," adds Jacobs, "I would have to say that that's doubtful. But you never know."

So far, *Girls* has been a hit with the critics, but with color and a new publisher, Jacobs and Jones feel they can bring in a larger audience.

OKAY, YOU KID'S MAKE PLANS. I'LL GO KILL SOME TIME WATCHING THE SUNSET. IN TROPICAL CLIMES YOU GET REALLY LOVELY ORANGES AND REDS.

Art: Tim Hamilton/Chuck Austen/Courtesy Comico

Well, what would you do if after saving the world and making love to a half-dozen beautiful women, you discovered you were going to be a movie star?

The process the two use to write Lester's adventures is the same thing they use to keep the character alive for them.

"We're *always* talking about Lester Girls," admits Jones. "Lester Girls is like our friend. I'm always out shopping for books and every time I see a collection of dog stories, I want to buy the book and give it to Lester."

"And since we're always talking about him," says Jacobs, "we're always generating ideas.

Art: Tim Hamilton/Chuck Austen/Courtesy Comico

All Trouble Art Tim Hamilton

"What we usually do is once we find an idea that we both like, we'll plot the issue out together to various degrees of detail. One of us rough-drafts half of it and one of us rough-drafts the other half and we'll revise it together."

Both note that Lester is a satire on no one individual character, but is a collection of ideas from both creators.

"Everything in our heads eventually finds its way into *Trouble with Girls*," says Jones. Jacobs adds, "Yeah, everything from comic books we've read to history to philosophy to movies we've seen—*anything* we experience, read or absorb."

Maxie, however, won't be seen much in the first few Comico issues as Lester pursues his high school sweetheart, Brett Ashley.

Other future events in the life of Lester Girls include the revelation that the C I A. is after him, the return of the Lizard Lady and Lester's guard dogs, and a shift from action and adventure to Lester "seeking after the answer to his problems, attempting more directly to change things and his life, like trying to find the right girl to settle down with," says Jones.

There is also a chance *The Trouble with Girls* may even make it to the big screen. Jones and Jacobs have a completed first draft for a live-action film and are awaiting news on the project.

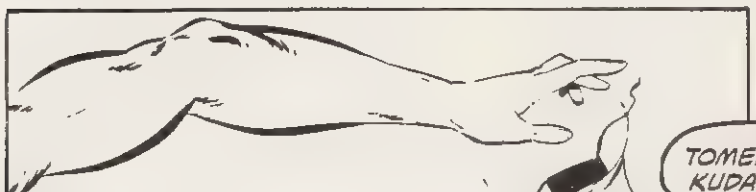
"There are a couple of producers in Los Angeles, who are big fans of the comic, who contacted us and are very interested in doing it. Beyond that, it's still up in the air," says Jacobs. "It's very hard to get it produced."

The two production companies vying for the *Girls* script are Impact Films (responsible for *Commando*, *Teen Wolf* and *Burglar*) and Godmother Filmworks (who did the critically acclaimed film *Tell Me a Riddle*). Jacobs and Jones hope to write the film's screenplay--if at all possible.

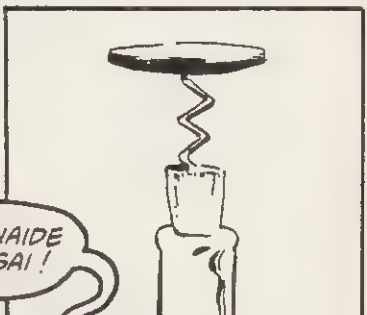
While the partners have discussed who they would like to see portray Lester, they have trouble visualizing anyone as Tim Hamilton's drawings.

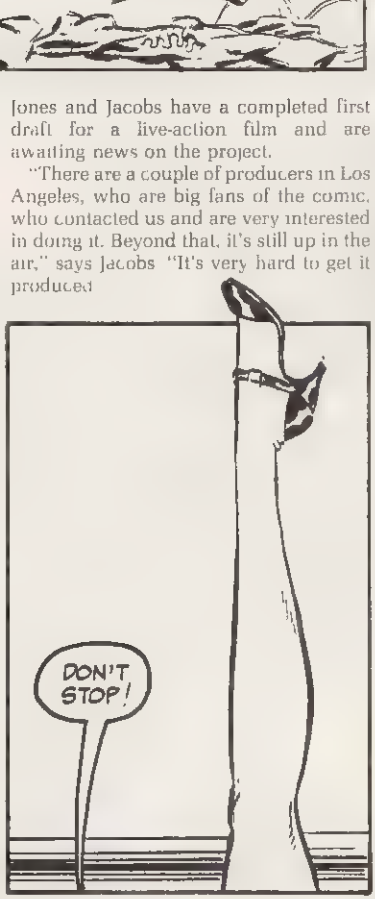
"It is virtually *impossible* to see an actor in those roles," states Jones. "Tim has made the characters so real for us."

"I guess we'll just have to see whom the producers pursue and try to have as much veto power as we can," finishes Jacobs.



Art. Tim Hamilton





Trouble with Girls Trademark & Copyright 1989, 1989 Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones

Lester's novel was originally born as a "bestseller," where each chapter satirized a different popular movie genre of the time. Gradually, the character was born. But Jacobs and Jones didn't want to do a stereotypical action hero. So first, he was a reluctant hero, then they built a whole mystique around him, like his obsession with 1950s America.

"The original notion was one of a guy living the life of a cheesy bestseller, but in his spare time, he wants to write a sensational book. But because his life is so absurd, his idea of a sensational book would be about farm kids," explains Jones. "So, we had that at the beginning, living the high life and yearning for the rustic. Later, we decided having him be a novelist was too unwieldly, and we just made him live out the dreams he had as a kid instead."

Although Lester himself is a product of satire, his companions are more real. The writers consider the wise-cracking Apache Dick, who epitomizes the good life, as simply "the man who enjoys everything Lester is trying to get rid of."

Maxie Scoops, the reporter who will do anything to get an interview with Lester, notes Jones, "started as just another plot function but she has grown a great deal. We saw her originally as another way to add some more complexity to the story as this reporter goes after him, that sort of thing. But as things evolve, she just becomes part of Lester's gang."

"Yeah, we've been thinking about her character development quite a bit lately, and we'll have some interesting developments coming up soon," reveals Jacobs. "Our idea for Maxie in the future is a Dorothy Parker type."

Jacobs and Jones are also working, both solo and together, on other projects scheduled for the near future. Jacobs will continue to try and publish his serious novels, while Jones has been hired by Weidenfeld and Nicolson to write the non-fiction book *Sugar Coated Mirror: A Critical History of Television Comedy*. He will also be a contributing writer to Marvel's *Ad Astra* project and will write this year's *Shadow Annual* for DC.

Together, Jones and Jacobs will be writing the introduction to the upcoming *Underschool*, written by controversial comic journalist Sydney Mellon. They're also assembling a four-part mini-series called *Tommy and the Monsters* for Nicotat. The series will have two artists, Chuck Austen and David Williams.

"It's about a kid, a spaceman and a robot battling hordes of alien invaders in a rather random fashion," explains Jacobs. "What we have is a world where every type of monster out of *Alien Invasion* and old cheesy 1950s movies have survived until now. It's a world ravaged by these aliens and these three freedom fighters are fighting them off. What you get is a really light-hearted comic. The idea behind it was really breezy, fast moving, fun, funny and light-hearted, with a rapid-paced wordplay."

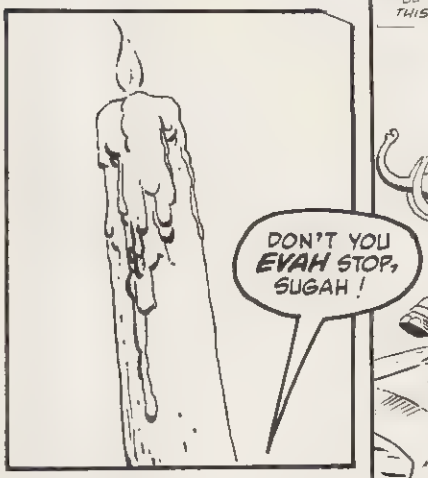
While Jacobs says the series' tone will be as funny as *The Trouble with Girls*, it won't be as satirical or intellectual as simply wide open, with more visual humor and less character development.

"Less wit and more lunacy," they both admit.

"Tommy is a boy genius who alternates talking like an 11-year-old and talking like a thesaurus," says Jacobs.

Space Fargo is a crusty old spaceman who is helping Tommy fight the extraterrestrials. They both "hang around" with a robot named Gork "who looks a lot like Gort from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*." They will fight a motley crew of aliens, from shape shifters to radiation fiends.

If you had to break it down to a premise, it would be as if all those horrible movies were *real* events and we actually were besieged by latex monsters. But unlike the horrible dystopias you get in science fiction, people have adjusted to it and there are support groups for parents whose kids have been taken over by pod creatures."



All Trouble Art: Copyright 1988, 1989 Tim Hamilton

Other upcoming *Trouble with Girls* projects include possible mini-series for Apache and Maxie and a graphic novel that includes the first three Eternity Comics issues plus the first three chapters of the original Lester Girls novel.

As for Jones and Jacobs, both say they could go on writing Lester for several years.

"Anything's possible. We keep generating five story ideas for every one issue," says Jones. "And we *do* have a master plan, a very big master plan that could be utilized for quite a while.

"We're always upset with all the things we're not doing with Lester. With every issue we do, we complain about the 10 issues we didn't do. So, we could keep doing this for a *long* time."

Above all, fans need not worry about *The Trouble with Girls* getting serious. Jacobs and Jones plan to do their part to keep fun in comics.

Art: Tim Hamilton Dave Garcia

"Lester Girls is our friend," says Gerard Jones. So, why do they insist on making life so miserable for him?

"What bothers me about comics is that they just *aren't* fun anymore. To me, that's the function of comics. If I want to read literature, more often than not I'm going to read *serious* literature. I mean, there are some very good comics, like *Love and Rockets* and *Concrete*. But there's a matter of time. I would be more prone to read comics if they were fun. I'm not interested in people's dark visions and the serious approach to comics."

(continued on page 32)

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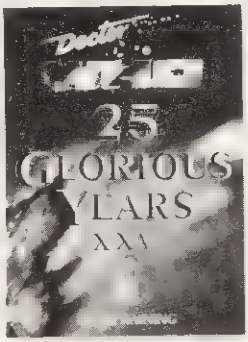

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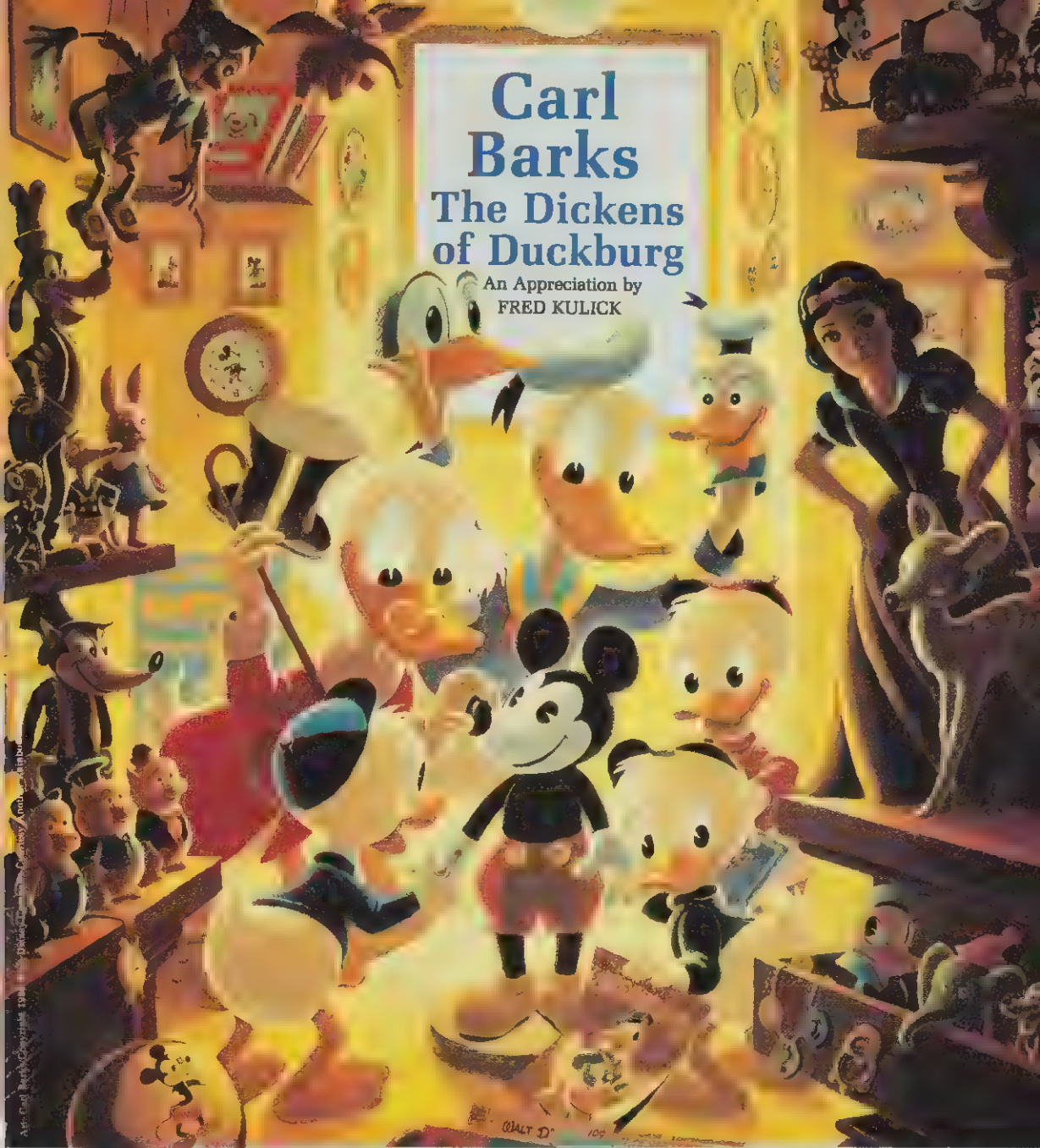
Carl Barks
The Dickens of Duckburg

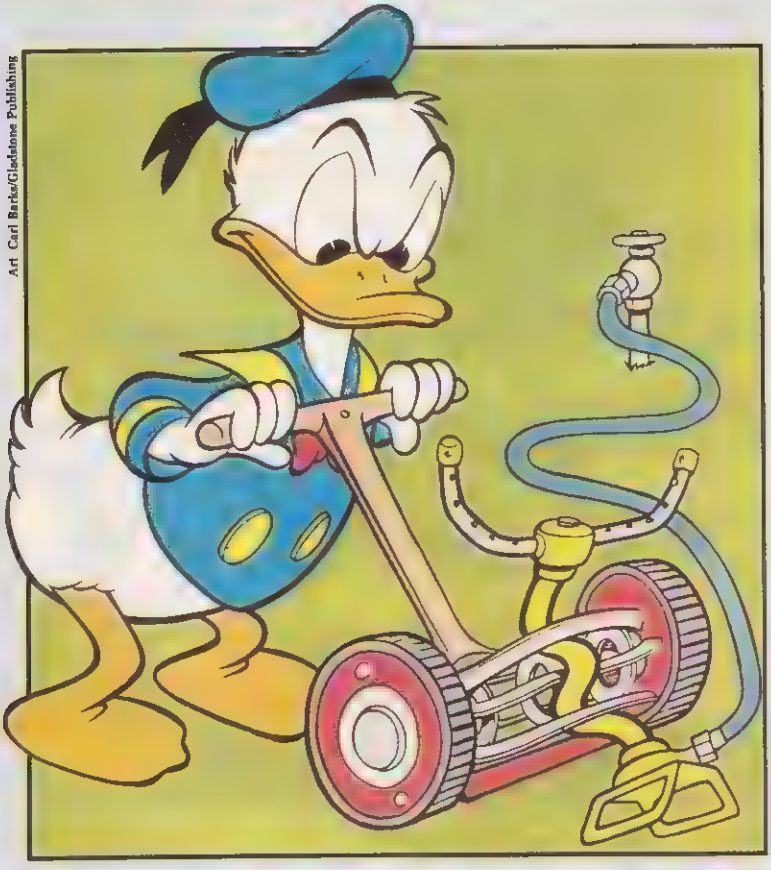
An Appreciation by
FRED KULICK



Meet the man who made those mallards so memorable.

They hardly touch most of the magazines in my waiting room, but they devour my Uncle Scrooge comics! By the way, I'm a Wall Street stockbroker," a fan in New York recently remarked. "Hooray! They've begun to reprint Barks again!" writes another. "For myself and thousands of other fans, this is too good to be true: reprints of Barks!"

Fan mail like this constantly flows into the editorial offices of Gladstone Publishing Company. Yet, 47 years have passed since Carl Barks and Jack Hannah drew "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold" (1942). Adapted from the rejected storyboards of the never-produced film "Morgan's Ghost," it was the first original Disney story to become a comic book. The success of that four-color adventure launched Barks' more-than-25-year career as one of the most successful writer/artists in comic history. And the appreciation of his work continues to grow. Dr. Donald Ault features Barks' work in his "Popular Narrative" course at Vanderbilt University. Thomas Andrae, an instructor in mass communications at the



Art Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

University of California at Berkeley, includes Barks' literature in his courses. And those are only two examples.

In 1985, Gladstone resurrected such titles as *Uncle Scrooge*, *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* and *Donald Duck*. Gladstone currently lists eight titles which feature the indomitable fowl and rely heavily on reprints of Barks' work. Who is the man behind the Ducks?

Carl Barks was born March 27, 1901 in eastern Oregon. His formal education lasted through the eighth grade and was obtained in a one-room school house. In 1916, he enrolled in a correspondence course in cartooning but soon gave it up due to the pressures of World War I. During those days, he worked as a farmer, logger, riveter, muleskinner, cowboy and printing press feeder, but he continued to draw. In the early 1930s, his cartoons appeared in such humor magazines as *The Calgary Eye-Opener* and *Judge*. In 1935, he joined the Disney Studios as an inbetweener and storyman. His inbetweens of a tap-dancing Mickey Mouse, done for the 1936 "Thru the Mirror," foreshadow the fluid suggestion of movement that is one of the hallmarks of his style

A 1959 Barks 10-pager, "The Swimming Race," has Unca Donald trying to teach his nephews a lesson by challenging them to a swimming race; true to his character, Donald goes to elaborate lengths to win by cheating. This story originally appeared in *WDC & S* #190.

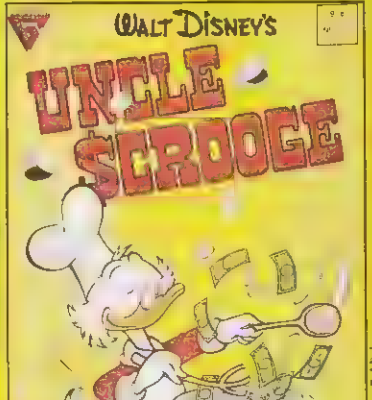
Photo: Edward Summer

Carl Barks, the legendary Duckman, is an American treasure.

Art Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Barks created this cover for the original Dell *Uncle Scrooge* #3 (Sept. '53), featuring the story "Trouble from Long Ago" in which Scrooge is pitted against the villainous Chisel McSue in an adventure of lost treasure on the high seas. Currently, this cover appears on Gladstone's *Uncle Scrooge* #212, which includes three one-page Barks gags with Scrooge trying to wangle a bargain out of a 10¢ cup of coffee.

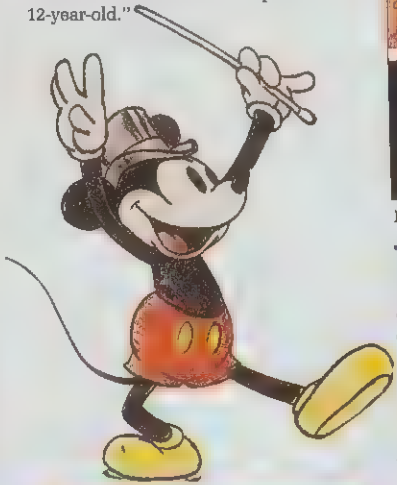
Another Scrooge character gag by Barks is the cover of Gladstone #221. Inside is Barks' 1956 story "The 'Colossalest Surprise' Quiz Show" and a one-page, no-dialogue Barks gem with a seemingly generous Scrooge feeding a squirrel an apparently unending supply of nuts.



Art Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

After "Pirate Gold" caught on, he wrote and drew "Donald Duck and the Mummy's Ring" in 1943, beginning his journey into the wonderful world of Ducks. Along the way, he created such notable residents of Duckburg as Uncle Scrooge, Gladstone Gander, Gyro Gearloose, Flintheart Glomgold, Magica de Spell, and the Beagle Boys.

"I know I was supposed to aim at about the 12-year-old level," Barks said in the Another Rainbow book *Mickey Mouse in Color*. "However, my opinion of a 12-year-old's intelligence was far higher than what the editors expected of a 12-year-old."



Art: Carl Barks/Copyright 1989 Walt Disney Company/Courtesy Another Rainbow Publishing Company

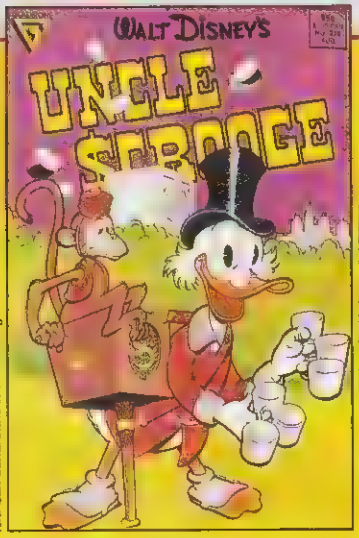
IT CAN'T BE BUT IT IS. THERE ARE THE FOUR ROCKS IN A SQUARE! GOLDIE DUG INTO MY CACHE!
I FORGOT THAT I BURIED THE NUGGETS ON THIS KNOLL. I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN A CAPSULE THIS MORNING.
SCROOGE SCROUNGES GOES HOME WITHOUT HIS GOLD!
I LOSE A FORTUNE ALL BECAUSE I WOULDN'T TAKE A TEN-CENT P
LISTEN TO HIM RAVE. YOU'D THINK THE OLD MISER WOULD BE ASHAMED OF HIMSELF!

Art: Carl Barks/Copyright 1989 Walt Disney Company/Courtesy Another Rainbow

In "Back to the Klondike," a Scrooge treasure horde brings new luck to Glittering Goldie.

What makes Barks' material so distinctive? Like Charles Dickens, from whom he borrowed the name of his most popular character, Barks managed to infuse his stories with thought and substance, and in so doing, he single-handedly reshaped Donald's film persona. Instead of the irascible temper tantrum-throwing prankster, Barks molded him into a duck who could express a full range of emotions and feelings. Somehow, during this process, the humanity and humor of Barks himself seemed to magically transfer itself to the Ducks. His characters live and breath and think. They are not just clothed ideas or wooden chess pieces making the standard moves around the checkerboard of a tired plot.

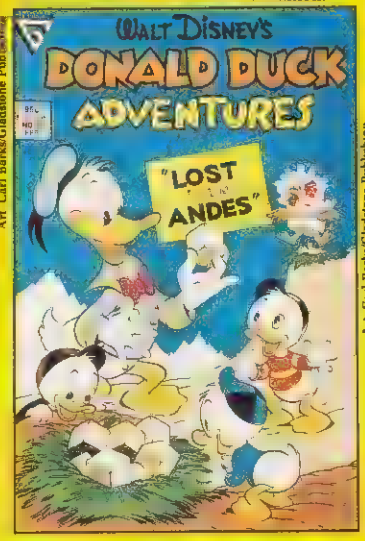
His Duck family involves us on an emotional and intellectual level with their human faults and foibles. And if they can



Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Currently gracing Gladstone issue #228 of *Uncle Scrooge*, this Barks cover gives no clue to the story inside. Many Barks covers worked as full-page character gags. This issue's Barks story, "Chugwagon Derby," (originally in Dell's *Scrooge* #34, June 1961) is a clever reworking of a 1943 Barks story, "The Hard Loser," in which Donald and his nephews enter a no-holds-barred steeplechase.

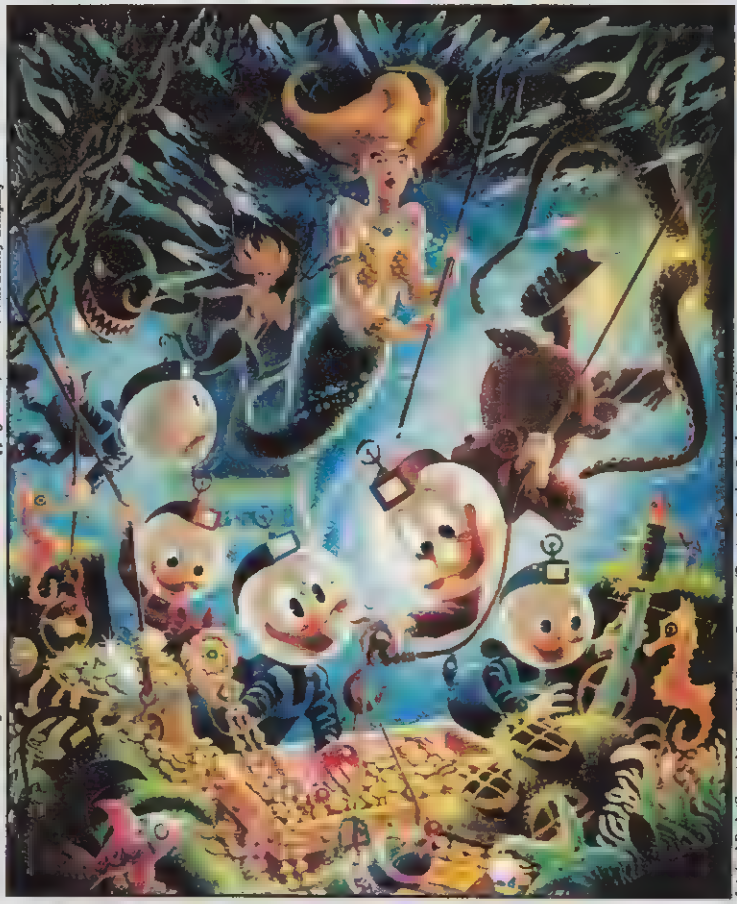
"Lost in the Andes" was the cover story of *Dell 4-Color* #223, originally published in April 1949. This 32-page epic story (recently reprinted as Gladstone's *Donald Duck Adventures* #3) is Barks at his best. Deeply interested in the ways of man, his exotic tales are satires of the human condition.



Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Gladstone's *Donald Duck Adventures* #8 features a classic Barks cover for a modern Duck story by Don Rosa; the original cover appeared on *Dell 4-Color* #348 (Sept-Oct 1951). A number of very inferior Duck stories were ground out by Western, particularly after Barks turned his full time attention to *Uncle Scrooge* in 1952, so Gladstone's editors asked Rosa to create a new tale called "The Crocodile Collector."



All Donald Duck, Uncle Scrooge & Associated Characters Trademark & Copyright 1952, 1989 The Walt Disney Company

Art: Carl Barks/Copyright 1989 Walt Disney Company/Courtesy Another Rainbow Publishing Company

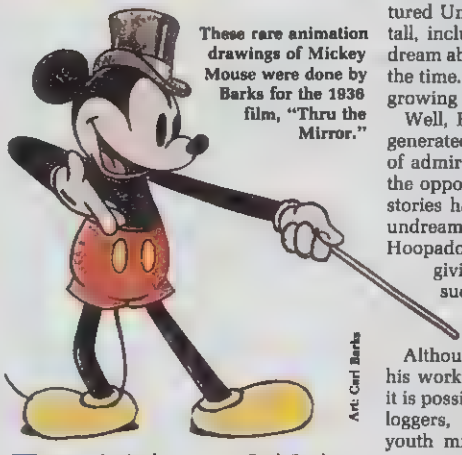
***The Making of a Fish Story*, another original Barks oil painting, recently sold for $75,000.**

sometimes exemplify our worst traits, they can also represent our best. Who can forget Uncle Scrooge's noble behavior in the 1953 tale, "Back to the Klondike," when he deliberately rigged it so that Glittering Goldie, his penniless old flame, could find his hidden cache of gold?

Barks refused to "write down" to his audience and he avoided the cliches.

When Barks retired in mid-June 1967, readers all over the world had been captivated by his witty interpretations of modern life, but few knew him by name. He was still the anonymous "good artist." It took the comic book renaissance of the 1970s to finally focus the spotlight of recognition on him.

As his fans began to seek him out, they requested oil paintings of the lively comic book covers he had done for so many of their favorite Duck stories. Barks complied, often charging modest fees for his efforts. However, as the demand increased, Another Rainbow began to publish high quality lithographic reproductions of his oils. In 1985, the reproduction of *In Uncle Walt's Collectery* sold for $395. Today, if a copy can be found on the secondary market, it frequently fetches $650 or more. The original painting was sold a few years ago for $75,000.



Art: Carl Barks

These rare animation drawings of Mickey Mouse were done by Barks for the 1936 film, "Thru the Mirror."

I was invited to meet Carl Barks at the offices of Another Rainbow when he stopped there to deliver his latest painting and sign a new batch of lithographs and posters. He is almost six feet tall, handsome and agile, almost to the point of being athletic. When the truck arrived to unload the half-ton of Barks lithographs and posters, Barks jumped up on the loading dock and we had all we could do to stop him from unloading the boxes himself!

He is still quite modest about the fact that his work has received such acclaim and that he now has more fans than ever. I mention that my favorite story is "A Christmas for Shacktown." "Oh, many people tell me that. My second favorite is 'Lost in the Andes!' But my most favorite is 'Island in the Sky.' "

As for the creative approach to composition that he uses in his paintings, "I start working small," he explains, indicating a size about six inches by six inches, "and spend many, many hours working out the composition. I do several drawings, and then I put paint on it. At that point, the whole composition changes because the Ducks almost always wear certain colors. The balance depends a lot upon where those colors fall. In my first sketches for *Return to Morgan's Island*, for example, I had Uncle Scrooge directly in the center. But it didn't work, so I had to change it."

Paintings done by his wife, Gere, have been reproduced as cards by Leanin' Tree. "She does beautiful landscapes. Both of us used to do paintings for local art shows, but hers always outsold mine five to one," laughs Barks. "I used to do small humorous paintings that few people seemed to understand or appreciate. The problem she had with her paintings was that she used *too* much technique. So, I taught her composition and she taught me technique."

With the Ducks constantly on his mind, Barks confesses that he had always pictured Uncle Scrooge to be about 3½ feet tall, including his top hat. Does he ever dream about them? "Yes," he admits. "All the time." Leaning in closer, and his eyes growing larger, he adds, "*Nightmares!*"

Well, Barks' Ducks certainly have not generated nightmares among his legions of admirers. If anything, they have done the opposite. His visual novels and short stories have transported readers to such undreamed-of places as the Kingdom of Hoopadoola, Itsa Faka and Plain Awful, giving fans the pleasure of meeting such characters as Philo T. Ellic, Sheik Hassan Ben Happi and the Phantom of Notre Duck.

Although Barks has often denied that his work contains any hidden messages, it is possible that his experiences with the loggers, welders and cowboys of his youth might have made a stronger impression on him than even he may have realized. "If they hadn't seen humor in their hard-bitten lives," he once commented to a fan, "they would have gone crazy. They had the ability to laugh at the most awesome miseries." Perhaps this is a clue to the deeper meaning of Carl Barks' work, that humor can and should be found in the worst of times as well as the best of times. ■

Keith Giffen, Group Therapist

Art: Bart Sears

Even after exporting some of the Justice League to Europe, he still commands a "L.E.G.I.O.N." of superheroes.

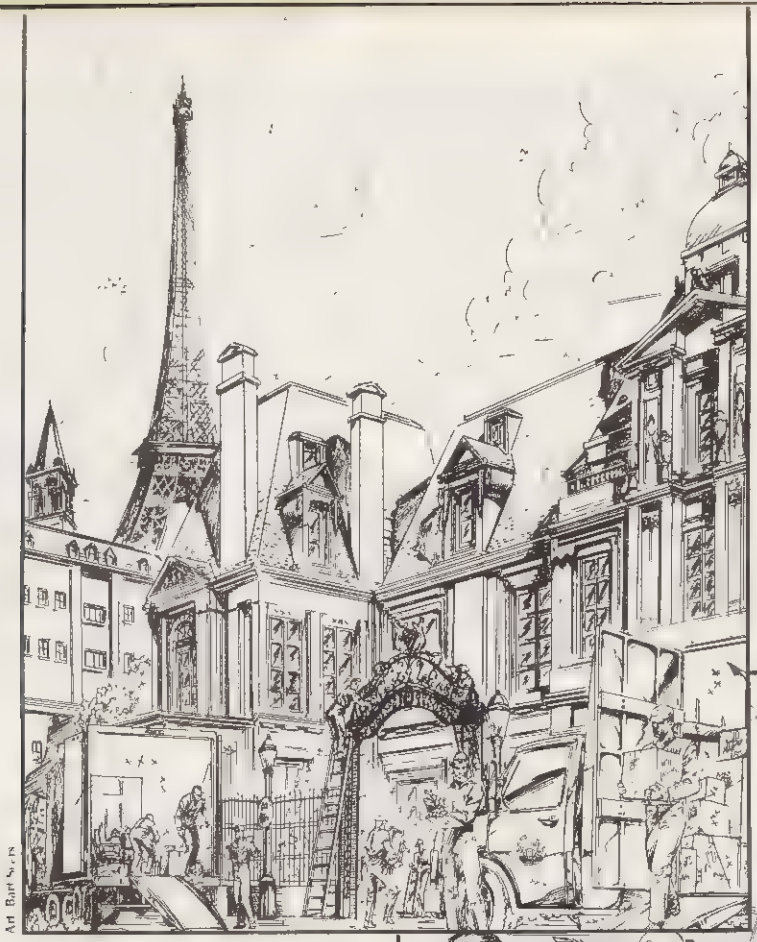
By EDDIE BERGANZA & DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

Keith Giffen is a comic "fan boy" 's worst nightmare—he doesn't take his work too seriously. In his time as a writer/artist at DC, he has had Darkseid serving burgers and fries at McDonald's, made clear how he regarded the Legion of Substitute Heroes as stupid and gave the once stoic Martian Manhunter an addiction to Oreo cookies. Nothing is sacred and worse yet, he says, " 'post-Crisis,' 'revamp' and 'continuity' are three words I can do without hearing again."

When he was asked to give the Justice League a much-needed facelift, Giffen stayed clear of the overused "back to the basics" approach. Instead of relying on the Garden Fox era for inspiration, he went for something "completely different."

With a nudge and wink from Monty Python, The Ruling Class ("a wonderful film with Peter O'Toole that nobody but me has ever seen") and a tip from Joseph Heller's Catch-22 and John Irving's more humorous pieces, the camera-shy creator took an irreverent view of the Justice League. And he's far from done.

Overcoming the initial unease that



The JLE shouldn't even bother unpacking. Giffen wants to "take them to Germany and their wonderful castles. I would love to bounce them around the Vatican, but I guess that's out."

comes from the tape recorder's pulsating red light, Giffen reveals how he plans to devote himself entirely to DC –a master plan of which his Invasion! *of that universe was just the beginning. It seems America is no longer big enough for him.*

COMICS SCENE: Why a *Justice League Europe*?

KEITH GIFFEN: Because *Justice League International* is selling so good. [*Laughs.*] No. Justice League International is supposed to be a worldwide organization, and we've been concentrating on the New York end of it when we've got all these other cities that we claim have embassies and all these DC heroes can be used. We figured why not have core groups in strategic spots around the globe? It isn't so much that Justice League Europe is a separate team as it is another precinct in the same police force, which I think is a horrible analogy.

CS: A branch office.

GIFFEN: Yeah. The characters are almost interchangeable. JLI people *will* be appearing in the JLE's book and vice versa. It's really one big group that's split in two so they can handle emergencies in different locations. And there seems to be more of a demand for *Justice League*-oriented stories, so I figure we're filling a need or a desire at least.

CS: How different a book will it be from *Justice League International*?

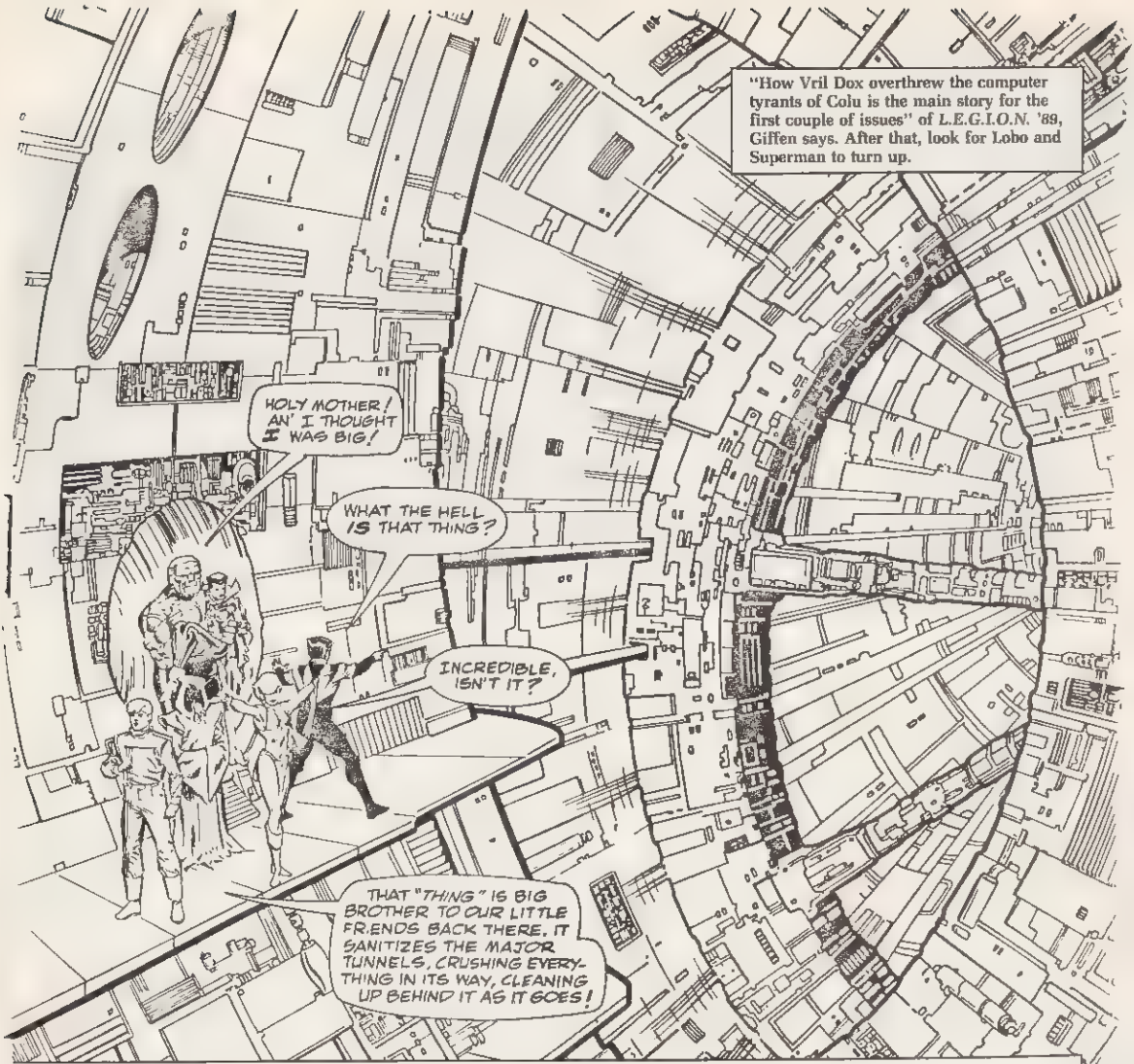
GIFFEN: You got me. I don't know if it's going to be as light just because of the characters that are in there. I'm not going to go into the book and say, "OK, this one's the Blue Beetle character and this one's the Booster Gold character." They're going to react to different situations in different ways. So, at this point, I'm trying to familiarize myself with these guys as I go along.

CS: Who will be the beginning group?

GIFFEN: Wonder Woman part-time, the Flash, the Elongated Man, Rocket Red

Hey! Why aren't more foreign characters in *Justice League Europe*? "There really aren't many heroes from different countries," says Keith Giffen, "but then, give me the name of a Brazilian superhero."

All JLI, JLE, Legion, L.E.G.I.O.N., Suicide Squad & Associated Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1988, 1989 DC Comics Inc.


"How Vril Dox overthrew the computer tyrants of Colu is the main story for the first couple of issues" of L.E.G.I.O.N. '89, Giffen says. After that, look for Lobo and Superman to turn up.
HOLY MOTHER! AN' I THOUGHT I WAS BIG!
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING?
INCREDIBLE, ISN'T IT?
THAT "THING" IS BIG BROTHER TO OUR LITTLE FRIENDS BACK THERE. IT SANITIZES THE MAJOR TUNNELS, CRUSHING EVERYTHING IN ITS WAY, CLEANING UP BEHIND IT AS IT GOES!

Art: Barry Kitson/Mike De Carlo

and Captain Atom are both going over, Animal Man, Metamorpho, and Power Girl. I think I've covered everybody.

CS: In that listing, with the exception of Rocket Red, there aren't any foreign heroes.

GIFFEN: No. DC has not, well, really no comic company has populated the other countries with superheroes quite the same as they've populated America, so you go for the heroes who are available. We'll also cobble up a few of our own. We've got a British hero that we're going to be introducing in one of the books.

CS: How "foreign," for lack of a better word, will *Justice League Europe* get? Will we see adventures set around the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame?

GIFFEN: Yeah. There are so many sites over there. It'll be closer in flavor to the original *Justice League of America* in that they'll split up into different little teams, go off and investigate something, and then they'll all come together for the finale. But it *will* be more international Before I take them into space or into another dimension, I want to bounce them around Europe, which means a massive photo reference for the artist, but let's not mention that.

CS: What's going to happen in the first few issues?

GIFFEN: Well, the first three issues deal with what happens when they find a dead Nazi on their doorstep. It's sort of a who's-behind-this-what's-going-on. The fourth and fifth issues will deal with the membership and how they relate to one another. We really won't be ready to do anything in terms of major conflicts and big villains again until the sixth issue. I tend to plot by the seat of my pants. I talk to [editor] Andy Helfer, I sit down and put it on paper. I'm not one of these people who has it planned 12 months ahead because then you're stuck; you've locked yourself in

CS: Who will be working on *Justice League Europe* with you?

GIFFEN: Well, Marc DeMatteis [CS # 4] is coming along for the ride, so he's going to be dialoguing it. Bart Sears—wonderful newcomer, did the third issue of *Invasion!*, a couple of issues of *C.O.P.S.*—is pencilling the book. Joe Rubinstein, who has been the inker on *Justice League International*, is inking it.

CS: Wasn't there was some trouble getting Wonder Woman for *JLI*?

GIFFEN: When you're dealing with a character, especially one who has her own book and it's an ongoing concern and they've got big plans for the character, you can't just go in and say, "OK, I'm going to take Wonder Woman and do this." I have to check in with [WW editor] Karen Berger and talk to [WW writer] George Perez, so there's a lot of conversation back and forth.

ALREADY DONE, STEALTH, MY DEAR!
DAMN! WILL YOU STOP SNEAKING OFF LIKE THAT? YOU'RE GOING TO END UP GETTING THAT DURLAN BUTT OF YOURS STOMPED GOOD!
I GIVE UP! I'M JUST GOING TO SIT HERE TIL I DIE OF OLD AGE!

I'm constantly in touch with Cary Bates about Captain Atom, and in return for his co-operation, there are things going on in his series that have to do with Justice League International that I haven't touched on in their book at all. Eventually, it'll all come together.

And [*Flash* writer] Bill Loebs is just wonderful to work with, and he's open to new ideas.

I have this agreement with people whose characters I'm using, and that is when they walk in the door of that embassy, they belong to me and I'll send them back in the shape that they need them in. It takes trust on the parts of the editor and the guy who's doing the book to hand over a character to a group like this, and they pray the character will come out in one piece. So far, we've done good enough, I guess, because people are volunteering characters.

CS: Is there anybody you really want to get into *Justice League*?

GIFFEN: I would like to get as many of the original Justice League of America members as I possibly could, but I'm involved with this Aquaman mini-series, so I didn't want to use him at this point. I really wanted [the Hal Jordan] Green Lantern, the Atom and Hawkman, but again, Hawkman has something cooking. If I kept Hawkman in *Justice League International*, we would be clashing, so I had to get rid of him as fast as possible.

Hawkman served his purpose, though. He became a straight man. This group needs a straight person, somebody who's down to Earth who's going to say, "You idiots! You people are lunatics! That man just got shot. Stop making gags!" That's why I wanted Green Lantern.

CS: Now, what about the feelings among die-hard fans who don't like the lighthearted treatments of the characters?

GIFFEN: Don't read the book. If their objections are that bad, they shouldn't read the book. Yeah, we're doing different interpretations, but these are characters who are inter-reacting with their peers. When I get together with a group of my friends or my peers, we don't sit around and moan, you know, this existential angst and all this. We have a good time, there's joking around, there are practical jokes. I don't really look upon *Justice League* as a humor book, per se; I look upon it as a buddy book. Even though

"With L.E.G.I.O.N.," says Giffen, "none of them want to be there."

GREAT! THERE ARE TROOPS MUSTERING FOR US! WE'RE DONE FOR THIS TIME--REALLY DONE FOR!
OH GIVE THE HISTRIONICS A BREAK, BEK! DION ANYONE ELSE? YO, YOU'RE NOT DEAD, NT--JUST LIE DOWN AND DIE!
IF WE CAN'T GO BACK WE GO ON--STRAIGHT THROUGH THEM!

Art: Barry Kitson/Mike De Carlo

"So far," says Giffen, "there aren't many role models" in *L.E.G.I.O.N.* '89, the comic with the serious attitude problem.

they argue, these guys obviously get along, they enjoy each other's company, and it has to come through.

CS: It's strange that they get along. It seems the opposite, that they're always bickering.

GIFFEN: Well, when Andy Helfer and I get together, you would think that we were enemies because we're always at each other's throats, but it's a good-natured, wink-wink, nudge-nudge, you're a dope, ha-ha. You do it with your friends, too. Why should superheroes be any different? We're approaching superheroes as people and then layering on the costumes and the masks.

CS: Was there any resistance to that when you first proposed *JLI*?

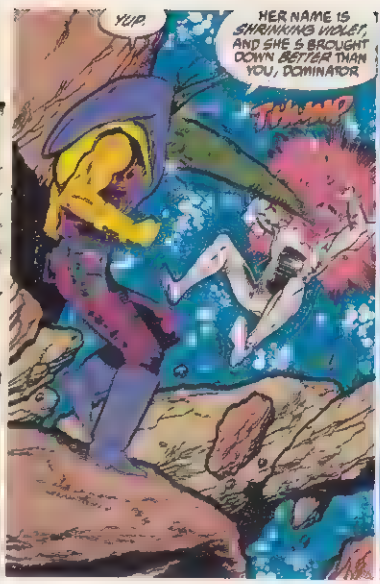
GIFFEN: No, because the humor just grew out of the book. We didn't come in and say, "OK, let's do something that's funny and disguise it as a superhero book." They gave us a set group of characters and we said, "Let's tell some good stories around it." As I started plotting it and Marc started dialoguing it, the little one-liners became bits and the bits became extended fooling around on the characters' parts. It evolved into the book it is. It was a natural outgrowth of the way we felt about the book. It took us by surprise, too.

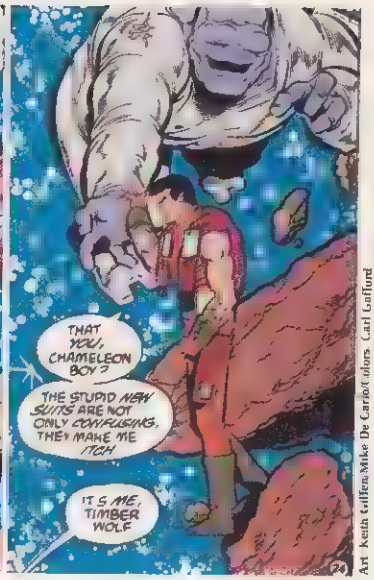
CS: Since you're credited with the breakdowns on *JLI*, how much of the characters' facial expressions were Kevin Maguire's?

GIFFEN: It's all his. When I plot—I can't type, I hate machines—I do it almost the way Mike Baron does to a certain extent and Harvey Kurtzman used to on the war books. I draw a little, itty-bitty comic breaking down the page and setting the rhythm. It's up to the penciller if he wants to stick with my layouts or do it his own way. All I ask is that the information that I've got on the page is in the finished product. I don't care how he breaks down the panels, if he gets one panel and makes it two or changes the layout, as long as the information fits. Kevin does follow pretty much, but if he has an idea that he wants to toss in there, he's not shy about it.

CS: Like all the 007 spoofs in issue #16?

GIFFEN: Kevin's a real big James Bond fan, and I thought, "Well, with the group that we've got..." Then, we sat down





Art: Barry Kitson/Mike De Carlo

Art: Keith Giffen/Mike De Carlo/Colors: Carl Gaffford

and said, "Why not do a James Bond riff?" We bounce ideas back and forth, and I just work up the plot, and put it in the pencil stage. Everyone's kind of integrated. I'll do the plot, but all the banter, all the dialogue is Marc's. But, I might pick up on something that Marc does and then elaborate on it in the plot and then through his dialogue. And the same with Kevin. There wasn't as much mugging and character stuff in the first couple of issues until we realized how wonderful Kevin was at facial expression. Now we'll take the time to have a character react that second after the incident. So, we tend to play to each other's strengths. [Since this interview, Maguire has announced his departure. Ty Templeton has replaced him as penciller starting with *JLI* #25.]

CS: As far as *JLI* is concerned, what's coming up?

GIFFEN: We've got a two-parter that involves the Blue Beetle's futile attempts to kill Maxwell Lord and I'm not going to get into it any further than that. There'll be some revelations about Fire and Ice. We'll be focusing in a bit more on them 'cause they've just been standing around and pointing at things. I would love to bring back the Injustice League. I had so much fun with that group of villains that nobody else wanted. And I think it's about time Dr. Fate dropped in again. Again, these are just the germs of ideas because I really don't plot that far ahead.

I know that in this year's *JLI* annual, we're going to look in every embassy at least once, so people will know where they are and who staffs them. I have no idea what the annual's about, but Andy said, "That's what you're doing," so that's what we're doing.

CS: Of all characters, why are Fire and Ice in the League?

GIFFEN: Kevin, to use his term, said, "I want to draw babes." [*Laughs.*] They were the only two female characters that *nobody* wanted, so we brought them in. I had *no idea* who they were at first. And finding out stuff like Ice Maiden was somebody's ice goddess for while—I'm going to have a lot of fun with that! And Green Flame had all these weird powers, she could cause hallucinations with her fire breath. I thought, "No! She's a human butane lighter. It's a six-inch stretch and that is *it*!" Because every group should have a Matter-Eater Lad, you know? A character that [makes you wonder,] "Why are you there?" [*Laughs.*] I patterned Green Flame a little bit after Iris Chacon, a *bombastic* [Latino] entertainer, and she's getting by on sheer force of personality alone at this point, but there's going to be some stuff happening to her.

What? New costumes again? "Yes, every time I go on *Legion*, I have a tendency to start redesigning things," Giffen admits.

CS: Whatever became of Blue Devil, who was supposed to join the team?

GIFFEN: You got me. I never announced that he was going to join to begin with! [*Laughs.*] I don't know. Maybe he's in Justice League Antarctica. [*Laughs.*] They're heroes no one knows what to do with, going after penguin poachers and trying to free two whales and inadvertantly killing them. Those kinds of stories. They have all these other continents to play with. Why not?

CS: Since Hawkman is leaving, is anybody going to replace him?

GIFFEN: Not really. Hawkman, Captain Atom and Rocket Red are leaving and we've *still* got a full group. So, we're going to lock it in for a while. I don't want to wind up with a 20th century version of the Legion of Super-Heroes.

CS: Isn't that what L.E.G.I.O.N. '89 is?

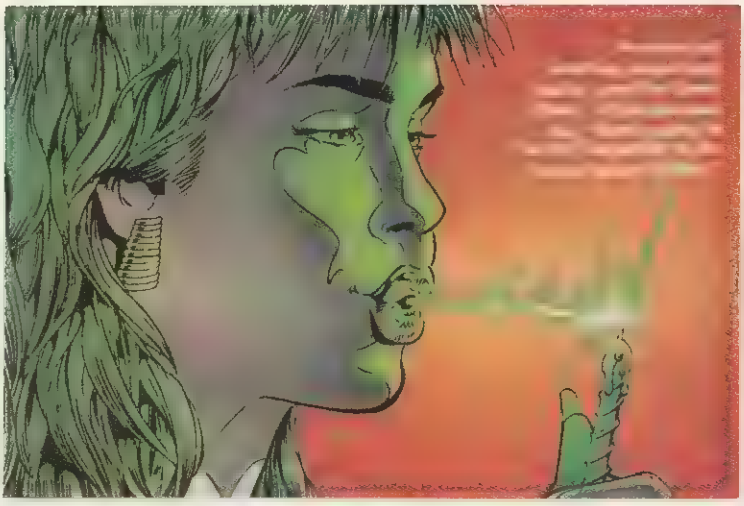
GIFFEN: No. L.E.G.I.O.N. '89 just borrows the name.

CS: Doesn't it stand for something?

GIFFEN: We'll let you know when we figure it out! [*Laughs.*] We have no idea yet. Law Enforcement . . . uhhh . . . Group? The title comes from the fact that we have Vril Dox in there and Lyrissa Mallor, some of the ancestors of the Legionnaires, but L.E.G.I.O.N. '89 is more of an intergalac-

Would you believe Ice Maiden's really a Norwegian ice goddess? Neither could Giffen, but, he says, "I'm going to have a lot of fun with that!"

Art: Kevin Maguire/Joe Rubinstein/Colors: Steve Oliff



Art: Kevin Maguire/Joe Rubinstein/Colors: Steve Oliff

tic police force—or will grow into that—something to replace the Green Lantern Corps.

We have Barry Kitson pencilling it and Alan Grant dialoguing it. Alan's real good at Draconian police forces because of his *Judge Dredd* experience. So, it's not going to be a Legion of Super-Heroes that has been transposed to the 20th century. This is going to be set up like a police force. There are going to be shifts, cop bars, the Intergalactic Miranda, uniforms, etc. It's *not* going to be a club that turns into this bureaucratic, top-heavy organization.

CS: But that means it could grow in members.

GIFFEN: Oh, yeah. "Legion" does mean a hundred. Don't tell Paul Levitz that. [*Laughs.*] L.E.G.I.O.N. does have a hundred characters. Like the Green Lantern Corps, there are going to be hundreds of them that you never touch on, but they're out there in different precincts.

CS: Who are the core members?

GIFFEN: Vril Dox, son of Brainiac and Brainiac 5's ancestor, an unnamed Durlan because they know who they are, Lyrissa Mallor, Shadow Lass' ancestor, Strata, one of Blok's people, and Garryn Bek, the poor fool from *Invasion!* who's constantly getting into trouble. He's an ex-narcotic agent from a planet that makes Columbia look tame. There's also a new character called Stealth, whom I can't say too much about right now, and Lobo [from *JLIs* #18 & 19] winds up joining after he's contracted to bring in Vril Dox. He comes into it because I like him as a character.

CS: Will L.E.G.I.O.N. '89 be meeting up with some of the other contemporary space characters, like Starro the Conqueror or Kanjar Ro?

GIFFEN: Yeah, I suppose so. One of the main purposes of *Invasion!* was to flesh out DC's science-fiction characters to populate space a bit. Marvel has the Kree and Skrull and all that, and DC had very little. So, by introducing some of the alien races from *Legion* shoved back to the 20th century, we have more to play with out there. I guess they'll be running into characters like the Hawk Police, maybe Kanjar Ro, ex-Green Lanterns, the Omega Men. If they're out there, eventually their paths are going to cross. But that's *not* the main purpose of this book.

CS: Is there anything really dramatically different between the two, something that you might find in *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89* that you would *never* see in *Legion of Super-Heroes*?

GIFFEN: Yeah. With *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89*, none of them want to be there. There are some really nasty people in *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89*. So far, there are not many role models in there. [On the other hand,] *Legion*'s the happy future book. One of the reasons for its success is that it says, "Yeah, we'll have wars and this and that will happen, but we're going to go out there and populate the planets and kids are going to be heroes. It's going to be OK." It's not mutants and atomic waste. It's not like *Hex* or *Road Warrior*, with people fighting over water. *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89* is going to be more along the hard edge. It's going to be a *meaner* book.

CS: Do you see *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89* as a *Legion* spin-off or as its own entity?

GIFFEN: I see it as a separate book leeching off of the Legion's name to get readers to try to pick it up. That sounded really cold-blooded. [*Laughs.*] It's a separate entity. I would like to think that *Legion* readers will pick it up and embrace it the same way they've embraced *Legion of Super-Heroes*, but I would also like to think that people who have never read *Legion* and don't want to read it will pick this up and say, "Hey! Not bad!"

CS: Since half of this group resembles a couple of characters from the other book, how are you going to keep them different from their great-grandchildren?

GIFFEN: The book's tone. Vril Dox, let's not mince words, is a bastard. He's an egomaniacal creep. I'm not playing Brainiac 5's ancestor as somebody who putters around in the lab all the time. No, the man's a *maniac*. The reason these guys are sticking around with him is just basically to protect people from him. Vril Dox is a dangerous individual. Strata, although he's a rock-form like Blok, is more aggressive. Lyrissa is probably the closest in terms of personality to Shadow Lass, but she's far more divergent. So, the book's going to have a much harder edge than *Legion* has.

CS: So, there's no humor in this book?

GIFFEN: There's always humor involved. No matter how serious something is, a little bit of humor [should be] in there just to break it up. But it will be a bleaker book. In fact, it's one of the bleakest things I'm doing.

CS: Well, *Legion* has been getting sort of bleak lately.

GIFFEN: *Legion*'s going to go through some big changes. I can say that Paul Levitz is leaving [as writer] and I will take over the plotting. Then, it's party time!

CS: Since you're going to be taking over, what are you going to do to make *Legion* more accessible?

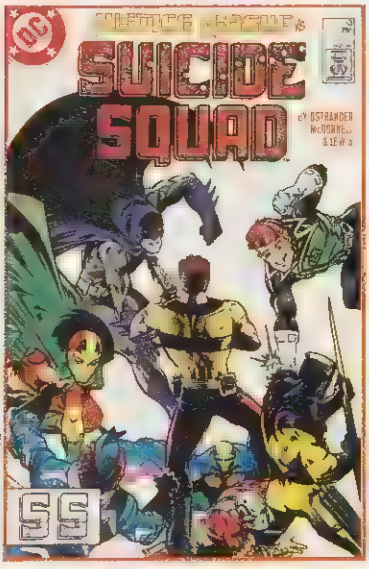
GIFFEN: I don't know. It's so far down the line when I'm going to be taking over *Legion*. I've got ideas, but nothing concrete. I'm following Paul Levitz's seven, eight years on the book. Egads! He has this encyclopedic knowledge of it, and I'm coming in for his last group of issues, and then to be handed the book! It has so many issues and such a rich history, the research alone is killing me.

CS: Why did you return to *Legion* in the first place?

GIFFEN: Why not? I did it for three years the first time around, and it just got too much for me. They asked me if I would be interested in coming back, and I

(continued on page 32)

"I like to crossover with *Suicide Squad*," says Giffen. "John Ostrander and I are trying to do the next one as a softball game between the groups, but nobody's biting."



Art: Luke McDonnell

Hell Hath No Fury

An agent scorned by his former friends, the old commando returns to defend the world with a smaller, stronger S.H.I.E.L.D.

By BARRY DUTTER

"Don't yield, back S.H.I.E.L.D.!" was the battle cry that first rang out in 1965 as the official slogan for an agency which every Marvel Comics reader knows—the Supreme Headquarters International Espionage, Law-enforcement Division.

For over two decades, S.H.I.E.L.D. served as the most powerful espionage agency at Marvel, until it was disbanded at the conclusion to last year's smash *Nick Fury vs. S.H.I.E.L.D.* limited series.

But now that S.H.I.E.L.D. battle cry will be heard once again in an all-new ongoing monthly series debuting this spring. Once again, S.H.I.E.L.D. will be led by that cigar-chompin', one-eyed ex-Howling Commando, Nick Fury. However, this time, Fury will *not* get title billing; the book will be known simply as *S.H.I.E.L.D.*

Bob Harras, who wrote the *S.H.I.E.L.D.* limited series and is returning to script the ongoing book, explains how Fury can come back as the head of an agency which no longer exists and how a new S H.I.E.L.D. will come to be.

"We're saying that there has been a lapse of one year since the mini-series," Harras begins. "And some things have *definitely* changed. For one thing, Nick is now allied with someone he wasn't allied with before that will be a surprise.

"The first storyline deals with Nick returning because of a threat from the past—a Nazi threat.

"When the first issue starts off, Nick is burnt out. After what happened in the mini-series, he doesn't want to have any more to do with the spy business. Almost all his friends died, his mission blew up, and now he's off living a solitary life.

"I figured what was needed was something from *his* past that was a major threat to the world. I wanted to do

something connected with [Fury's greatest foe] Baron Strucker, *without* bringing Strucker back.

"During World War II, Strucker had a corps of people around him called the Death's Head Commandos, and now they're trying to perpetuate fascism, Nazism. They're filling the vacuum left by the collapse of HYDRA and S.H.I.E.L.D. When this is discovered, Nick is going to be called back."

However, he'll work with an entirely new S.H.I.E.L.D., one that will be completely unlike the vast organization of the past. Readers expecting a world-spanning agency with thousands of agents may be in for a few surprises.

"There won't be a 'S.H.I.E.L.D.' in the first couple of issues," editor Gregory Wright states. "There'll be a group of people working together, but it's not going to be called 'S.H.I.E.L.D.' just yet.

"The first three issues will be the origin of the new S.H.I.E.L.D.—a very *small* group of people commanded by Nick Fury. Nick is not answerable to *anyone*. It's his organization, he runs it his way.

"He'll be working with a small group of rotating individuals who come in and out of the book. Nobody is a regular at the moment. There may even be occasional Fury solo stories."

Art: Jim Steranko

Definitive S.H.I.E.L.D. artist Jim Steranko was happy to contribute a cover to the mini-series, but even he had to wonder why Val's hairstyle never changed. Don't worry. It will.

Like Nick, Harras has found that "when you explore something that has this much power, you have to wonder what this power does to people."

Among the agents who will be working with Fury are the only other surviving members of the original *S.H.I.E.L.D.* cast—Gabe Jones, Dum Dum Dugan, and the Countess (Val), who will serve as the liaison between the government and S.H.I.E.L.D.

Gabe and Dum Dum won't be playing as large a role in the new S.H.I.E.L.D., due to their age. The two, Wright says, are "pretty much retired. It's a big change for them, not being in action all the time. But they are old and they just can't handle it."

As for the other characters who will be returning from the *S.H.I.E.L.D.* miniseries, Wright explains that "Pierce has sort of become Rambo; he idolizes Nick Fury to excessive degrees. He wants to be Nick Fury. Mac is a CIA operative who will also work with Nick. And Kate Neville is the woman who majors in efficient killing."

And while the current plan is for S.H.I.E.L.D. to remain small, Harras and Wright intend to recruit new agents.

"For a variety of reasons, Nick Fury is going to insist that the people he works with will be people he knows personally because of what happened. As time goes on, S.H.I.E.L.D. may get a little bigger. We're going to have a floating cast; Nick may call on different people for specific missions."

"Lump is an artificial life form who will hopefully have a major impact in the series later on," says Harras. "There will be an old German professor who has a connection to Nick's past. We don't have a name for him yet, but he will be Lump's guardian.

"An older Wakandan nobleman, introduced in the second issue, will probably serve as S.H.I.E.L.D.'s munitions expert. He's being brought in to give the book more of an international flavor.

"There will be a woman known as Network Nina, who's very familiar with the bar scene in New York; she knows everybody. She also happens to be a computer specialist. She's based on somebody I know, and she'll be more lighthearted than the other characters."

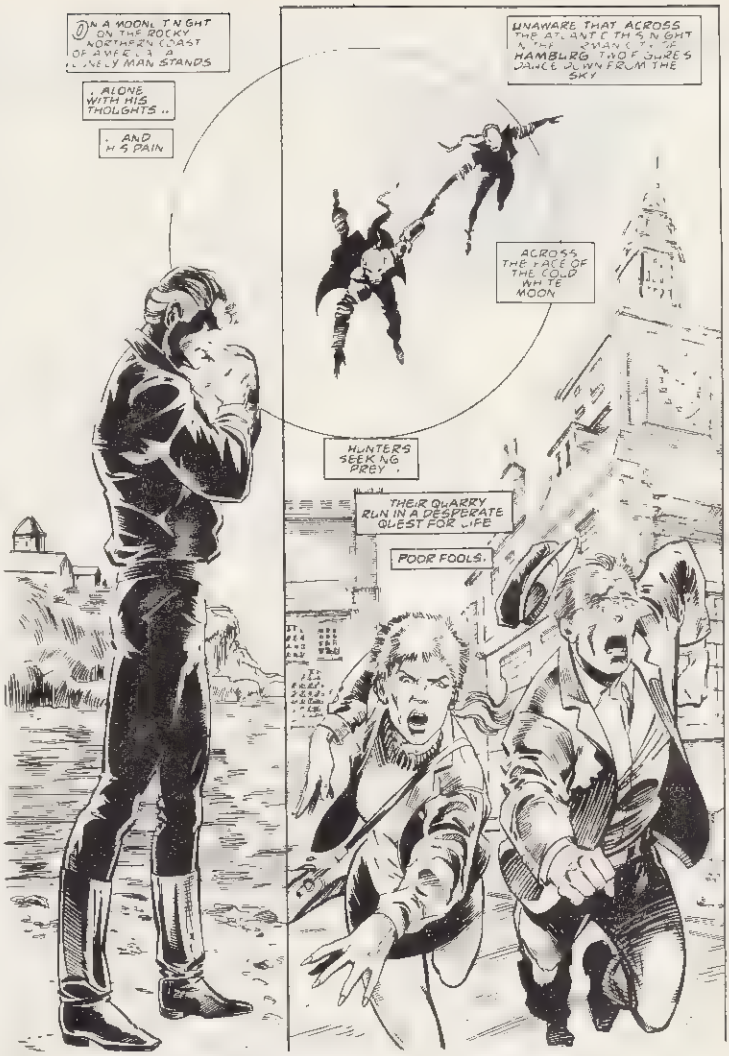
With a wider assortment of characters, Harras hopes to off-set the cast of the mini-series. "I called it the White-Bread Squad. They were all WASP Americans. I want to have Nick work with a more diverse group of people."

There are some other differences between the old S.H.I.E.L.D. and the new.

"The old S.H.I.E.L.D. was on a very large scale. They had things like the helicarrier, their flying fortress. There were hundreds of agents. It was a very large organization.

"Our new series involves a small group of people. We're *not* going for a grand scale. It will be more cloak and dagger."

Nevertheless, Harras notes that "Nick Fury has close ties with most of the heroes in the Marvel Universe, so they might be popping up from time to time. They might even be called in for specific missions."


ON A MOONLIT NIGHT ON THE ROCKY NORTHERN COAST OF AMERICA A LONELY MAN STANDS
. ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS ..
. AND HIS PAIN
UNAWARE THAT ACROSS THE ATLANTIC THIS NIGHT IN THE [illegible] OF HAMBURG TWO FIGURES DANCE DOWN FROM THE SKY
ACROSS THE FACE OF THE COLD WHITE MOON
HUNTER'S SEEKING PREY .
THEIR QUARRY RUN IN A DESPERATE QUEST FOR LIFE
POOR FOOLS.
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Art Bob Hall Kim De Mulder

How will Nick Fury stop the Death's Head Commandos without his old organization? Sorry. That information's classified until *S.H.I.E.L.D.* #1 is available for your eyes only.

The potential guest stars include Captain America and the East and West Coast Avengers. Wright expects Iron Man to appear as well, since the Golden Avenger's alter-ego, Tony Stark "has always had close ties to S.H.I.E.L.D.

"We'll be seeing many of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s old menaces," Wright adds, "the Yellow Claw, HYDRA will be back in full force, all of Nick's old enemies will return to haunt him. This is what forces Nick to realize that S.H.I.E.L.D. is still needed.

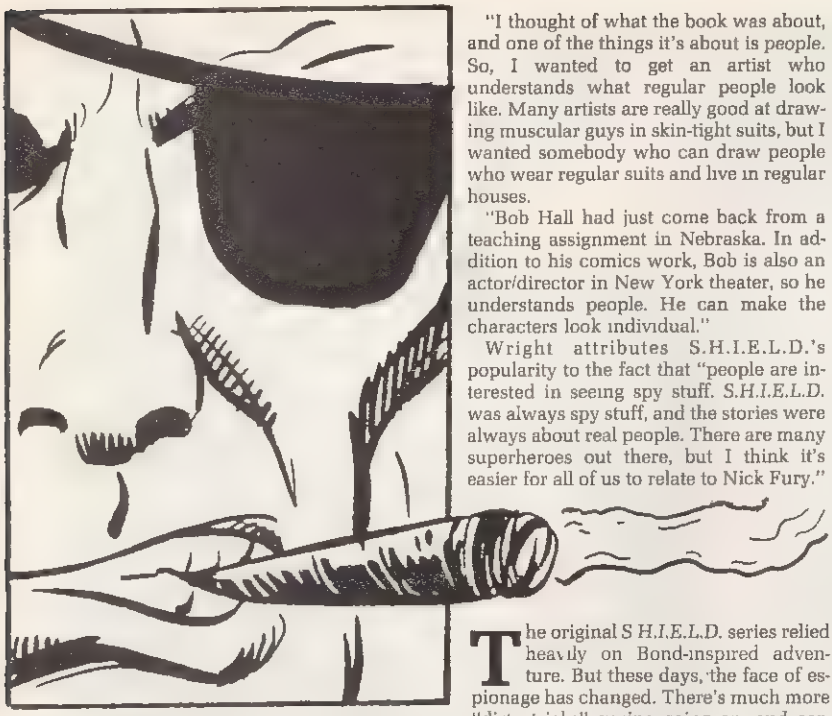
"But Nick has to take on these villains in a whole different manner now that S.H.I.E.L.D. is no longer on a grand scale. They don't have 600 guys anymore. So, the problem is, how do you deal with HYDRA when you've only got six guys?"

To make matters worse, the Death's Head Commandos "will definitely be superpowered," Harras comments. And when the Yellow Claw does return, "I would like to change his name. That's kind of racist, calling him the 'Yellow Claw'."

There are plans in the works to bring back Nick Fury's villainous brother, Scorpio, but this probably won't be until after publication of the Nick Fury/Wolverine graphic novel, *The Scorpio Connection* by Archie Goodwin and Howard Chaykin.

S.H.I.E.L.D. began during the James Bond/*Man from U.N.C.L.E.* spy craze of the '60s, but Bob Harras confesses he missed out on the series the first time around.

"I never really knew the characters that well. In fact, when [Marvel editor] Mark Gruenwald asked me to do the miniseries, I had to brush up on my S.H.I.E.L.D. storylines.



Will Nick still be able to mount successful operations against reader apathy? Editor Gregory Wright thinks so. After all, he says, "Spies have always been popular."

"I only knew Nick Fury as the guy who appeared in *Captain America* every once in a while. I knew Fury had had his own series, but I never read an issue from the first series until I was asked to do the mini-series."

Wright reveals that the *Nick Fury vs. S.H.I.E.L.D.* limited series was always intended to lead into a regular series. The plan was to have S.H.I.E.L.D. disband, thus paving the way for Marvel to start from scratch in a new title.

"We always wanted to bring S.H.I.E.L.D. back," Wright explains, "but we felt that it had gotten too big. So, it was decided that what we do in the mini-series was to take S.H.I.E.L.D. down so that we could bring it back up again. That was originally Mark Gruenwald's idea.

"Somewhere along the line, bringing *S.H.I.E.L.D.* back as a regular series was forgotten about. But then, the mini-series sold really well. People liked seeing Nick Fury and all that spy stuff again. It offered them something different from superheroes. There's *always* going to be a market for the big Marvel heroes like Thor and Spider-Man. But I think there's room for other stuff as well. S.H.I.E.L.D. seems to be very popular, so, based on the mini-series' success, it was decided to do a regular series after all."

Originally, the entire creative team from the limited series was to reunite for the ongoing title. However, penciller Paul Neary was unavailable. "Paul had to bow out for *Excalibur*," Wright details.

"I thought of what the book was about, and one of the things it's about is people. So, I wanted to get an artist who understands what regular people look like. Many artists are really good at drawing muscular guys in skin-tight suits, but I wanted somebody who can draw people who wear regular suits and live in regular houses.

"Bob Hall had just come back from a teaching assignment in Nebraska. In addition to his comics work, Bob is also an actor/director in New York theater, so he understands people. He can make the characters look individual."

Wright attributes S.H.I.E.L.D.'s popularity to the fact that "people are interested in seeing spy stuff. *S.H.I.E.L.D.* was always spy stuff, and the stories were always about real people. There are many superheroes out there, but I think it's easier for all of us to relate to Nick Fury."

The original *S.H.I.E.L.D.* series relied heavily on Bond-inspired adventure. But these days, the face of espionage has changed. There's much more "dirty tricks" spying going on, and corruption can be found in extremely high places. The new *S.H.I.E.L.D.* will combine both of these approaches.

"It's nice to make some social commentary along the way," Wright states. "We're not going to steal from real life exactly, though. But back in the '60s, there was a lot of stuff going on that people *didn't* know about. Also, technology was not as advanced as it is today.

"These days, we know more about conspiracies of governments, and some of the nasty things politicians do. So, we'll be using that, as well as '60s stuff."

Still, Harras agrees that *S.H.I.E.L.D.* should reflect the foul play that occurs in the spy game in the '80s.

"The whole spy business has a nasty ring to it these days, after the Iran/Contra affair and some of the stuff the CIA is doing. This is a business where people can kill people, and they can take the law into their own hands, and they aren't answerable to the authorities. So, you have to explore that dark side.

"S.H.I.E.L.D. is no longer the bright, shining light on the hill. It's something you should be a little wary of."

Some of the old S.H.I.E.L.D. characters will be taking on a new look as well, to bring them more in tune with the '80s.

Says Wright, "We started thinking along the lines of, 'Why should people look the same as they did 20 years ago? Why should they do the same things?'

"We want to show what these people have learned over the years. The Yellow Claw should know by now what doesn't work. He should realize that if he wants to get Nick Fury, he'll have to try something new."

However, S.H.I.E.L.D. fans can rest assured that Nick Fury will be portrayed much the same way he has always been.

"He hasn't really changed all that much over the years," Wright says. "Any changes in his character are due to what he learned in the mini-series."

Harras, in fact, notes that the events of the *S.H.I.E.L.D.* limited series have left Fury "less trusting, not so much of the government, but of organizations on a grand scale, and maybe of himself.

"He played the role of the good soldier, and by being a good soldier, he let things get away from him. Fury saw himself the way Oliver North sees himself: He's doing things for his country, and it's his country, do or die.

"Now, Fury sees that that can lead to disastrous results, and I think he learned from that. So, he has retreated from that life in the first issue.

"He has realized that he's getting older at a very slow rate, and he must deal with that. Because of his actions, most of his friends have died and he has to be responsible for that.

"So, Nick Fury is a man who's going to be carrying a lot of guilt. He won't be denying that guilt; it's there. Fury will be more bitter than he was."

Fans don't have to worry about Fury ever changing *too* much, however. Wright promises that the alterations in the character "won't be anything radical. Mostly, he'll just be the same grouchy old Nick Fury. That's the Nick I like!"

Even so, Nick Fury's personal life will play a much larger role in the new *S.H.I.E.L.D.* "One of the things that happened in that intervening year between the mini-series and this new series is that there was a rupture of a major sort between Val and Nick," reveals Harras. "When the series starts, she's with somebody else, he's with somebody else. Nick and Val are not sure if they can work together.

"I don't know how long that will last, or where it's going. But I like the idea of freshening up these relationships. Nick and Val have been together *forever*."

Wright promises that the by-word for the new series will be "variety."

"I would love to see a big, worldwide story, followed by a small, covert story, followed by a Marvel Universe action story with superheroes in it. I would like to see *all* the genres played out. I want to see human stories.

"I want to get the characters into as many different situations as possible. I would like to see one story in the mountains, one story in space, a crossover with the Avengers, maybe in a big war out in the desert. I don't want to see this book stagnate."

Even though S.H.I.E.L.D. was created more than 20 years ago as part of a then-popular spy craze, Wright feels the comic is still valid as the times creep into the '90s. "The world is ready for more S.H.I.E.L.D.," Greg Wright says. "It worked in the '60s, and it will work today."

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Art: Tim Hamilton

Trouble

(continued from page 15)

"What has frustrated me and many other people in this business is the fact that a lot of the good stuff continues, and occasionally a good fresh thing can pop up, but somehow or other, the bulk of comics haven't changed," complains Jones. "We've basically gone through the '80s without any real significant changes. I think that many people were expecting comics to make a big turn, to open up and tackle more subject matters, to leap out into the world at large, but really it's still business as usual for the mainstream. And for so many of the independents, who masquerade under different topics or different approaches, the essential storyline still involves conflict—a good guy and a bad guy. You can dress it up, you can say it's something different, you can say it's a war comic or an action comic or a crime comic, but it's still a good guy battering a bad guy and that's what makes up a bulk of the story.

"Another thing that made them hard to follow is the lack of anything resembling a self-contained story, which is something we're trying to avoid in Lester. The early issues were a bit more rambling than we would have liked, but in the recent issues, we're trying to be a little more compact, having stories get resolved. They may run two or three issues, they may run eight issues, but the point is that all subplots begin at the beginning of the issues and end by the storyline's end. There will be nothing loose about the story. And we want to tell real stories with beginnings, middles and ends. That soap opera structure gets awfully boring after a while."

"Out of all the comics out there, we think *Girls* has one of the best chances to break out and to have non-comic readers read us," says Will Jacobs, "We think it has potential for a wide readership. You don't have to be versed in all the icons of comic books to appreciate *Trouble with Girls*, so watch for us." ■

Giffen

(continued from page 26)

thought, "Yeah, it sounds like a pretty decent idea." It was about time. I mean, I haven't been on the book for four or five years, so I can go back with a fresh perspective.

CS: Where did the concept of the new costumes come from? They look like a "Foreign Legion in Space" kind of outfit.

GIFFEN: Well, it's the 30th century, and yet when these characters are going out, whether they're going to a frigid planet or a molten planet or whatever, Dream Girl's still going in a bathing suit! [*Laughs.*] And the villains are outclassing them. The villains have this and that and the next thing, and these poor clowns, if they get separated, they can't even call for a spaceship to pick them up! So, I started giving them pockets to put stuff in. I thought, "Well, you're going into combat, what's wrong with a little body armor?" It's just a logical approach, that you dress to suit the situation. You hear people asking, "Why are they wearing all these weird things all over their bodies?" But those things can be popped off. There's a basic suit that they're wearing, and they'll dress to the mission.

CS: The whole concept of costumes in the 30th century is ludicrous when everybody else is wearing more interesting things.

GIFFEN: Yeah. I've drawn crowd scenes and said, "Boy, these street clothes look better than Ultra Boy's suit." [*Laughs.*] It's not like this has been "the greatest revision ever made." It's just that I said, "What do I want the costume to look like? What do I want out of this suit?"

CS: Are you acknowledging their aging?

GIFFEN: Paul is starting to acknowledge it more. Here's Lightning Lass trying to pick up Magnetic Kid, right? There must be at least a 10-year age difference between the two, and that says she's probably pushing 30. If she is, so's her twin, and if her twin is... See? It's just like dominoes. I know the hardcore fans don't like the idea, but once it's started, you can't go back. I don't feel that comic characters *have* to age. Superbaby met Kennedy and Superboy met Kennedy and Superman met Kennedy. Ooops! [*Laughs.*] As long as they're good stories, *who cares?* Just put it back in the mylar snug and stash it away.

CS: Do you want to add more characters to the Legion?

GIFFEN: The book always needs new blood. It's great having a big cast because you use five characters and then {go to} five more and five more. By the time you come back to the original five, you're ready for them again. You can take a break from a character for a while. Otherwise, with a group like Justice League, that group's there and you've got to get them in every issue. So, the Legion has its benefits.

CS: We realize that you don't plan ahead very far, but is there anything in the works or has it been mentioned that L.E.G.I.O.N. '89 should meet their future counterparts?

GIFFEN: I would absolutely love it! Time travel stories are tough at DC right now because there are restrictions on its use, which isn't a bad idea. For a while there, people were bouncing back and forth through time the way you hop on the subway and head uptown and downtown. But I would love to bring the Legion back into the past and have them run into L.E.G.I.O.N. '89, or even the Justice League. Any of those crossovers, if handled properly, are going to be a real good story and satisfy the fans who need to see all the characters together. Yet, there's also a coattail effect because people who are only reading *Justice League* but never pick up *Legion*, they'll read that *Legion* because Justice League's in there and maybe they'll see something they like and say, "Hey, maybe I'll stick around for a while." Same thing with people who only read *Legion* but don't pick up *Justice League* or *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89* or any of the other books. That would be the main purpose of doing those kinds of crossovers—to spread the readership out a bit and let them know that there *is* something else out there.

CS: Of late, DC's space heroes, like the Omega Men, haven't set the comics industry on fire. How is *L.E.G.I.O.N. '89* going to be different?

GIFFEN: I don't know. Just tell the best stories I can and hope that people connect to it. Let's face it. When *Justice League International* first came out, who knew it would take off like this? I mean, we were in the midst of *Dark Knight, The Punisher*, these down-and-dirty versions of the heroes going out there and beating people up, this gritty realism thing. And here we came up with a book with a very tongue-in-cheek sense of humor. If you looked at the marketplace, the thing should have nosedived because we were going in totally the opposite direction from what people were buying. You can never predict what's going to sell. You've got to stick it out and hope for the best.

CS: Your art style has been constantly evolving over the years. Do you feel comfortable with it now?

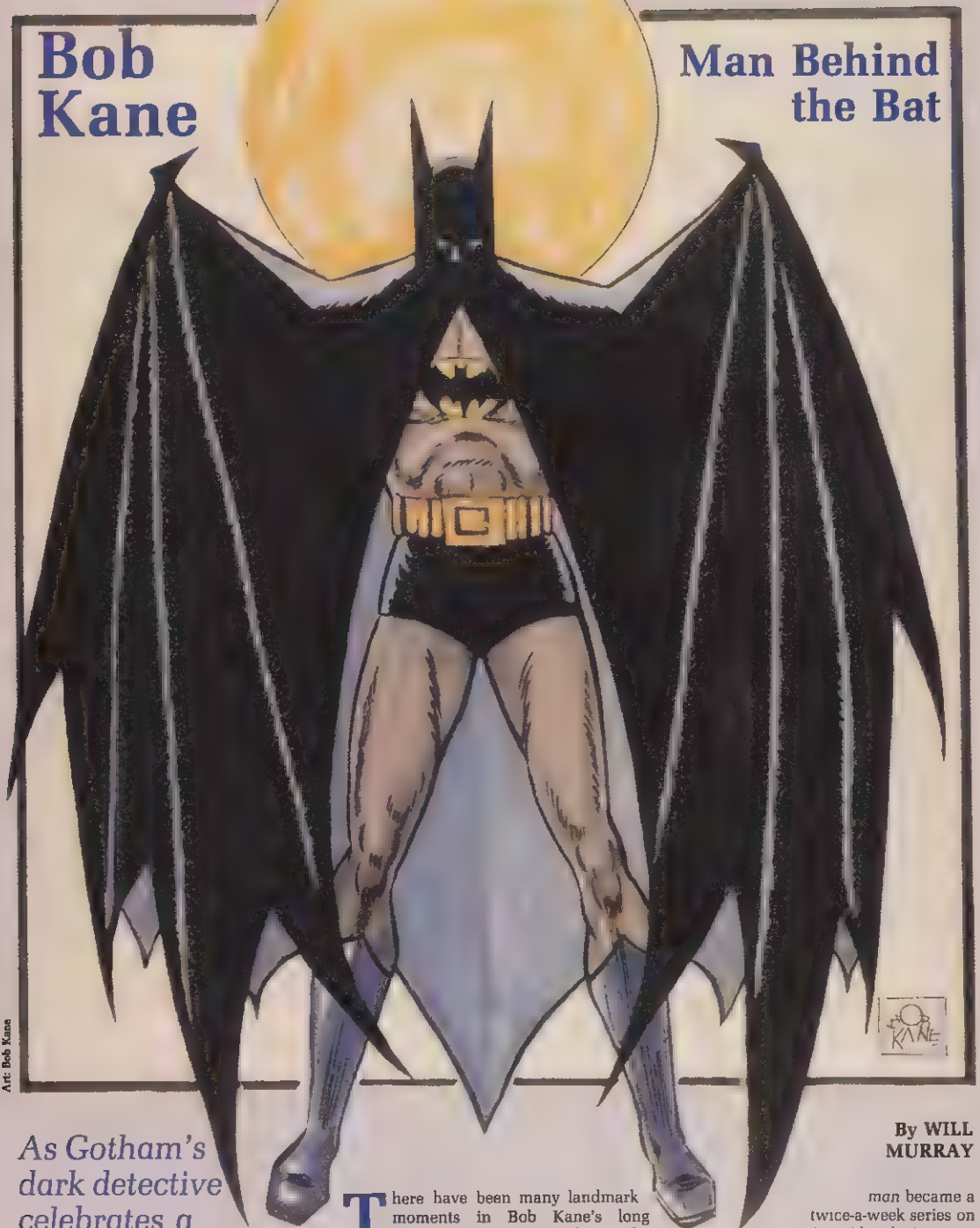
GIFFEN: I've been comfortable with it all the time. I would hate to think that I'm going to reach a certain level and then stay there. Each job dictates its own approach. I don't think you could use the same approach to draw Batman as you would to draw the Legion. Each book has its own atmosphere, and I just work it as comfortably as I can.

CS: You're being stretched over four books now. Aren't you spreading yourself thin? Are you overworked?

GIFFEN: No, not really. I'm plotting three books and pencilling one, and plotting is always a breeze. I don't feel any more harried than I've ever felt before. After doing *Invasion!*, I can put up with just about *anything*. ■

Bob Kane

Man Behind the Bat



Art: Bob Kane

As Gotham's dark detective celebrates a 50th anniversary, his creator looks to the screen for signs of Batman.

By WILL MURRAY

There have been many landmark moments in Bob Kane's long career. There was 1939, the year he and writer Bill Finger created the immortal Batman. Kane's sinister hero hit the silver screen in 1943 and again in 1949 in two popular Columbia serials, making those very big years for him, too. Neither serial, though, came close to creating the media explosion seen in 1966, when *Batman* became a twice-a-week series on nationwide television.

But Kane feels, and rightly so, that 1989 will really be his year. For this year, Batman celebrates his 50th anniversary. To mark this occasion, Kane has written an autobiography he calls *Batman and Me*, and is planning international showings of his lithographs and fine art paintings. A

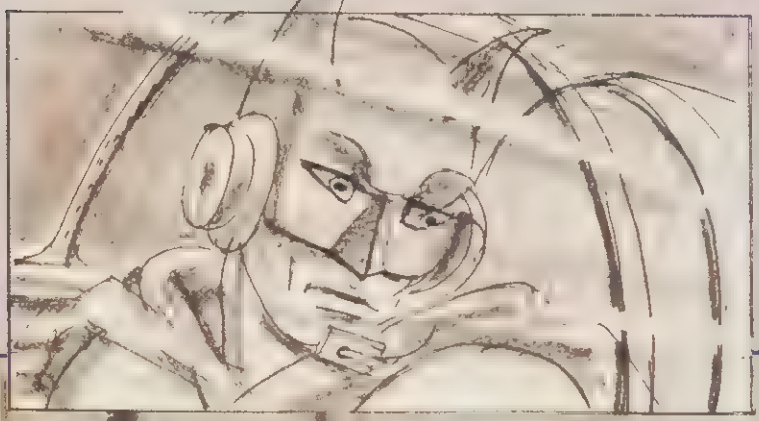
primetime *Batman* TV special is in the works. And most importantly, this is the year Batman returns to the silver screen in a big budget, all-star film that is almost guaranteed to eclipse anything Kane has experienced so far.

"This will be the culmination," he says. "It's kind of a milestone, the topper to my career. This should be the biggest year because they're planning more hoopla for me personally than they did in '66."

Even with the movie's scheduled July release still months away, the new *Batman* film is already a hot media topic. *The Wall Street Journal* and *Time*, among others, have fueled the speculation—some say controversy—surrounding the project, which stars Michael Keaton as Batman and Jack Nicholson as the Joker, under director Tim Burton. Will *Batman* be camp like the old TV series? Or will it be as gritty as Frank Miller's *Dark Knight*? These are some of the questions being asked, and most often, Kane is the one being asked them.

"It's going to be done straight," Kane promises. "Let me allay the fears of all the fans who think it won't. It *won't* be *Beetlejuice II*. It's going to be a mysterioso melodrama. It's going to be avant garde. Tim Burton is a great director with a *great* imagination. It will certainly alleviate the doubts of all the people who think it's going to be a comedy. It's going to be a heavy drama.

"It's the *definitive* Batman that Bill Finger wrote at the beginning, and more so. Batman was a little naive at the beginning, but now he has dramatic, psychological overtones. Bruce Wayne is a real three-dimensional character. He broods. He has migraines. He's not a cardboard cutout like the TV show or the comic book."



Batman Movie Art & Photos: Courtesy Warner Bros. Inc.

A storyboard from the film's no-holds barred climax shows the Dark Knight over Gotham in his Bat-wing heading toward a confrontation with the Joker.

Initial reaction to the casting of Michael Keaton, an actor primarily known for comedy roles, drew gasps and groans—not to mention outright howls of anguish—from Batman fans all over the world who, 20 years after the campy Adam West TV show, still cringe at the public perception of the Darknight Detective as a humorous character. Kane himself admits to initial puzzlement and dismay over the casting choice.

"When I first heard Michael Keaton," Kane recalls, "I was as bewildered as most of my Batman fans, only because I didn't know his work except in comedy. I think he's a fine comic actor, but I said, 'Michael Keaton? Oh, my God! What are they doing with Mr. Mom and Beetlejuice? This isn't the persona I visualized.' I visualized a heavy dramatic actor with the visual quality of a young Robert Wagner and the acting prowess of Robert De Niro

"However," Kane adds, "Tim Burton called me and explained why. He and Warner Bros. are very convinced by Keaton. But what really convinced me that Michael Keaton can do this role is the fact that I saw *Clean and Sober*, and I was really knocked off my feet by his dramatic performance."

Kane's final reservation had to do with how the physically unheroic actor would look in the cowl and batwings, but Kane picked up a pen and answered that question as only an artist could.

"I gave Michael Keaton a haircut," Kane jokes. "I took one of the stills from *Clean and Sober* and I cut away the long kinky hair and I gave him the '40s haircut like I wear or Bruce Wayne would wear. And you would be surprised. He's about 75-80% more handsome. I drew a Batman mask over his face, and surprisingly, he looks like Batman. I think he'll be fine in the movie, I really do. He'll change the minds of many fans who are skeptical at the moment. And don't forget, if we don't have a strong actor opposite Jack Nicholson, it will be one-sided."

The choice of Nicholson to play the part of Batman's arch-nemesis, the Joker, has itself triggered tremendous press coverage. Few articles, however, report that this bit of inspired casting comes, not from the producers or director, but from Kane himself!

"I brought it to Warner Bros. about five years ago," he reveals. "It was Jack all the way for me. I lobbied and lobbied. They had people like Robin Williams and Steve Martin in mind. But I couldn't see them for anything. I said, 'Just look at *The Shining*. There's the Joker for you!' "

Despite the recent intense activity, *Batman* has actually been in the planning stages for almost a decade. It began when producers Michael Uslan and Ben Melnicker optioned the character and formed Batfilm Productions, a partnership that eventually produced *Swamp Thing* and its forthcoming sequel. During its long, tortuous march to camera, the *Batman* film has gone through several different script treatments, as well as possible stars and directors (such as Joe Dante and Ivan Reitman). Through much of it, one cast possibility kept surfacing: Jack Nicholson as the Joker. But it was a while before Nicholson was himself convinced

"They went after him," Kane reveals, "but he wasn't easy to reel in. He was very reluctant all along to commit himself. I think he liked the script. Tim Burton influenced him in how he would be directed. And also maybe Bob Kane influenced him. I had lunch with him a couple of times."

During one meeting, Kane explained how the Joker was originally inspired by a 1926 silent film version of Victor Hugo's *The Man Who Laughs*. It starred Conrad (*Casablanca*) Veidt as a boy who through surgical incompetence is left with a hideous fixed grin.

"We discussed the character," Kane recalls, "so he went to see a screening of it. He said it didn't help him too much, but he saw the ghastly, grinning face, so that may have given him an idea for the makeup."

For three weeks in November, Kane was on the set of *Batman*, during shooting at the massive Pinewood Studios soundstages outside London, where, as the film's consultant, he toured the sets and watched his creation being brought to life.

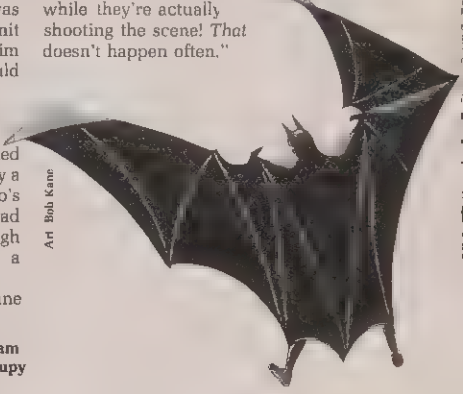
"They were shooting a documentary and they followed me onto the set," Kane recalls. "Michael Keaton as Batman was in a scene, and they were filming him with one of the hoods that he was fending off with his arms. The hood was wielding a knife. I was sketching Michael Keaton while he was in action, so the documentary will show me sketching him while they're actually shooting the scene! *That* doesn't happen often."

Batman Movie Art & Photos Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc.

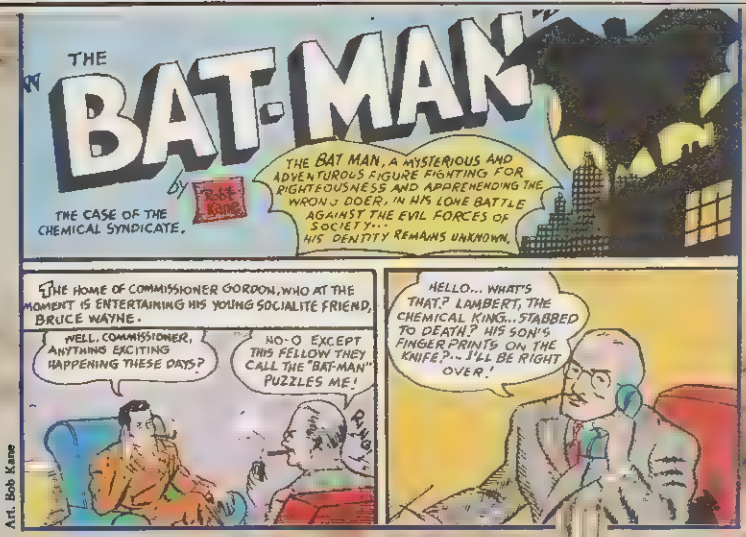
From the drawing board to reality, Gotham and its landmark settings went on to occupy five city blocks at Pinewood Studios.

Photo Courtesy Bob Kane

Fifty years ago, Bob Kane created Batman. This will again be their year.



Art Bob Kane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BAT-MAN
BY
Bob Kane
THE CASE OF THE CHEMICAL SYNDICATE.
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HELLO... WHAT'S THAT? LAMBERT, THE CHEMICAL KING... STABBED TO DEATH? HIS SON'S FINGER PRINTS ON THE KNIFE?... I'LL BE RIGHT OVER!
Art. Bob Kane

Kane did some "embellishing" on Michael Keaton, so that the actor would fit the artist's vision of Bruce Wayne.

For this Fritz Lang-inspired Gotham City, the designers toyed with Sam Hamm's notion of hell having broken through to the surface and kept on going.

Intense secrecy surrounds the film, and Kane, like any other member of the cast and crew, is forbidden to reveal any of the movie's cinematic secrets—specifically, describing the new Batman, Batmobile and the Joker in any detail. However, Kane does agree to give his impressions of what he saw on set.

For instance, this film's Gotham City will be unlike anything, including Kane's original fog-haunted cityscape, ever drawn by any Batman artist.

"There are five city blocks [built at the studio] and they're spectacular," he says. "It isn't like the New York of today. It's timeless. It's a combination of the '40s and the year 2000. It reminded me of the main streets of New York when I was a kid growing up there, but it also has a little bit of a futuristic Fritz Lang look. Hopefully, there will be a couple of sequels so it will never be outdated. That's another reason they made it more futuristic."

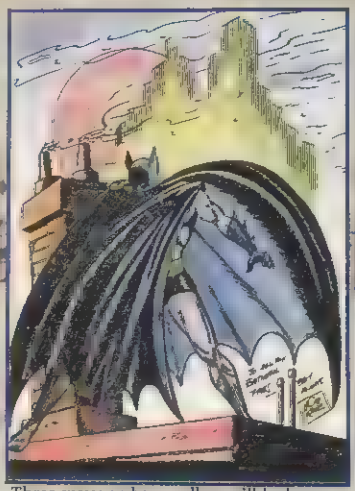
Neither will the Batmobile be recognizable to fans of the comic or TV show.

"It's a big, black *threatening* vehicle," Kane reveals. "I made some original designs. Mine were more like the comic book's with the bat hood. They thought that was probably too cartoony. But this one is just *awesome*. There's just no other word to describe it."

Kane was also asked to provide a definitive design for the bat costume. "I did the sketches for it," he says. "They followed my sketches pretty much. I did the original design and they improved on it. It *does* look like a bat. It doesn't look like Adam West's costume at all."

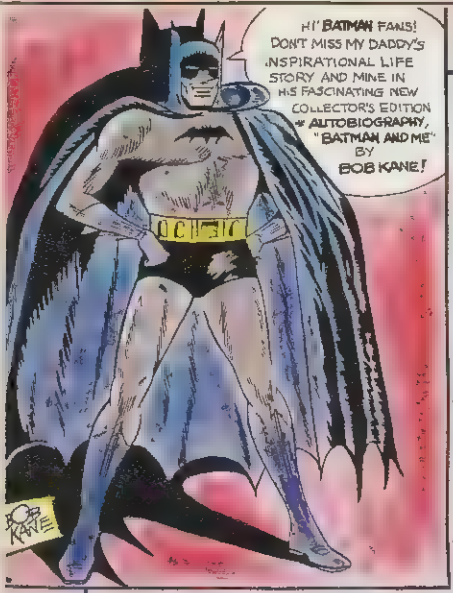
But Kane's greatest enthusiasm is reserved for the man in the cowl and scalloped cloak.

"Michael Keaton is going to knock the ears off the fans," Kane states unequivocally. "He is *definitively* Batman. He gets into that suit and he swaggers around that set and he looks like Batman. He's almost six feet tall with the big ears. I was very surprised. I didn't even know it was him walking around the set!"



Art: Bob Kane

Those vicious phone callers will be happy to hear that the Batman will prowl solo on the screen—just as he did in the early stories. There's no Boy Wonder.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Mark of the Bat

Fifty years ago, Bob Kane was toiling in the fledgling comic book industry, drawing humor strips such as "Rusty and his Pals" for *Adventure Comics* and other pioneer DC titles. Superman had energized *Action Comics*' sales the previous year and *Detective Comics* editor Vince Sullivan invited Kane, who was then only 18, to come up with his own superhero.

Over a weekend, Kane tried sketching out a character who would emulate Superman but not copy him. After a false start or two, he came up with a character he thought might work. He called him "The Bat-Man."

But what made Bob Kane opt for a mysterious masked crime fighter who lurked in the shadows and dealt out grim justice to street criminals—the very antithesis of the colorful Superman? And why a bat, a traditional symbol of death? Why not an eagle or a hawk?

"I was really inspired by three influences for Batman," Kane recalls. "One was Leonardo DaVinci. He had [designed] a flying machine 500 years ago. It was a man on a sled with bat wings, the first glider. DaVinci's *Book of Inventions* had this very sketch I'm talking about. And his quote on that bat glider was 'Your bird shall have no other wings but that of a bat.' I saw that sketch when I was 13 and to me, it looked like a bat-man.

"My second influence was a movie called *The Mark of Zorro*, with Douglas Fairbanks Sr.," he continues. "And there I got the dual identity. Zorro was kind of a foppish playboy. At night, he became a crusader fighting against injustice in the old Spanish West. He would don a stocking mask with two slits for the eyes and he had a sword that would imprint a 'Z' across the desperado's head when he would duel with them. I was influenced by Fairbanks' swashbuckling, derring-do deeds."

[It's an interesting irony that when Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster conceived the Superman/Clark Kent duality the

During the course of production, Sam Hamm's (CS #3) script has been revised several times, resulting in one surprising character deletion, despite stories that the part had already been cast.

"Robin *has* been cut from the film," Kane confirms. "Originally, he only came in for five minutes at the end as Dick Grayson and never as Robin. Coincidentally, they killed Robin off [in the comics]—not the real Robin; it's Jason Todd. The real Robin is still living as a Titan, so I suppose he can go back and take Robin's place, although he's a big boy now."

Kane isn't certain if the "Death in the Family" sequence in *Batman* #426-429 had anything to do with excising Robin from the film, but he adds one hopeful note. "I think Robin will be in the sequel."

Talk of a sequel may sound premature, but Kane is confident.

"There is a surprise in the movie," he says, hinting at what may be in the works for *Batman II*. "Billy Dee Williams is Two-Face. He's not Two-Face in the first movie—he's Harvey Dent—but if the sequel does have Two-Face, he *will* play him. It's a stretch from the caucasian Harvey Dent, but I think it's great."

However, Kane did experience one disappointment while on the set.

"There's Bob the Cartoonist," he says ruefully. "I was supposed to have my cameo, like Alfred Hitchcock, but they pushed that scene back till the end of January, because Jack Nicholson wanted to get all his scenes in and go on to another project. I'm not sure I'm going to fly back there in the dead of winter for the one-minute scene. The compensation is that they did the documentary with me, so I'll have more than enough exposure."

Whether Bob Kane gets his cameo role or not clearly won't diminish his enthusiasm for the new film. And although he expects that *Batman* will be light years away from the familiar Adam West vehicle of two decades ago, he still has a soft spot in his heart for that show

"It's a classic," he says firmly. "It will stand forever on what it is. It's camp. It's a comedy for the older folks, and the kids took it seriously when it came out. It's on two levels. And the villains! My God, you'll never in your life again see an array of villains with name stars in cameos. The TV show was phenomenal then, and even now. It's having a big resurgence in England. The Baby Boomers are seeing it the way we saw it in '66 and they're going crazy for *Batman* over there."

Although a far cry from the film noir creature of the night Kane originated in 1939, Kane still feels Adam West's Batman was in its way faithful to what the comic was in the 1950s and '60s.

"I loved it right off," he recalls. "It was a comic book come to life. It was unique. If they had played it straight like *The Green Hornet*, it would have bombed. It would have been like the TV *Superman*. It was straight for its time, but that was in the '50s. *Batman*'s still a classic, though. It will go on forever."

Kane is more critical of the two Columbia *Batman* serials, which were not intentionally funny, and for which he served as creative consultant.

"You know," he reminisces, "today you look at them and they're very campy, but they were done on a very low budget.

year previous, their source was Baroness Emma Orczy's Scarlet Pimpernel, who like Johnston McCulley's Argosy pulp hero, Zorro, feigned timidity to cloak his dynamic nocturnal alter ego. Zorro, though, was inspired by Orczy's character.)

"The third influence was a movie [based on a novel] by Mary Roberts Rinehart, a mystery writer," Kane adds. "It was called *The Bat Whispers*, with Chester Morris. The only difference in the movie was the Bat was a villain. But he wore a bat costume. You would see shadows of the Bat throughout, but at the very end, it revealed him in his Bat costume, which was not too unlike my bat costume later."

Before Kane submitted his idea to Sullivan, he showed it to his friend and sometime collaborator, neophyte comics writer Bill Finger, who made certain contributions that greatly focused the character, such as suggesting that instead of bat wings, Batman should wear a batlike cloak.

When Kane presented Vincent Sullivan with the fully-realized Bat-Man—as he was styled in his first appearance in *Detective Comics* #27, May 1939—the DC editor was very receptive.

"He flipped," Kane recalls. "He said, 'This is it!' "

And so was born a legend as well as one of the most fruitful writer-artist collaborations in comic-book history. As Kane's employee, Finger scripted the early Batman episodes, co-creating with Kane Batman's true identity of Bruce Wayne, Commissioner Gordon, Robin and a gallery of villains from the Joker to Two-Face. It was also Finger who conceived Batman's origin, which was not revealed until *Detective Comics* #33.

Although it was many years before Bill Finger's contribution to the Batman mythos became known outside of the industry, Kane recalls Finger, who died in 1974, with respect and gratitude.

"He brought a great deal of the early pulp writing style to Batman," Bob Kane remembers. "I really feel he's the unsung hero of Batman."

—*Will Murray*

They had a *lot* of action. The first actor was Lewis Wilson. He was kind of overweight. He looked like he needed a bra. And Robin was about 32, with curly hair. He should have been 17. The Batmobile was a grey convertible. I said to the director, 'Why don't you at least get a black limousine?' They were quickies. If you see them today, they're really campy. But they weren't bad for the era.

"Actually, when I first saw them, I was quite thrilled," he admits. "I thought they did a Cecil B. DeMille epic. But don't forget, I was a kid then. I was impressed to see my name on the screen. I thought from then on, Batman would catch on. I knew that it had staying power."

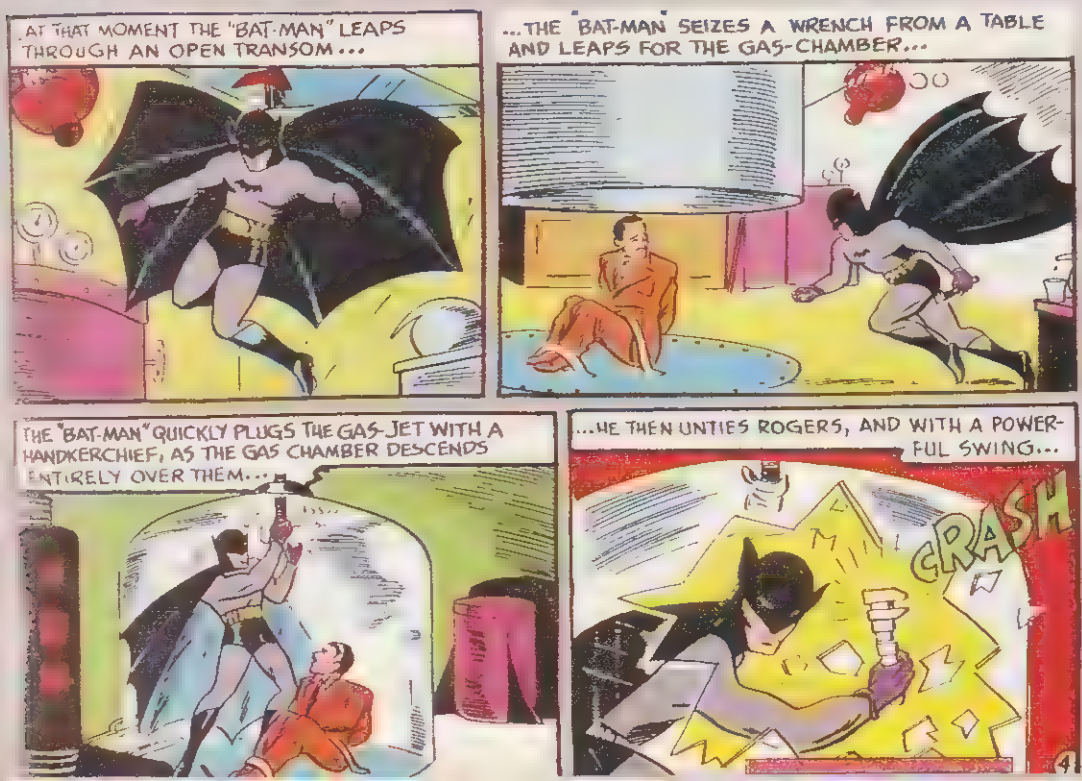
The first serial, simply titled *Batman*, starred Lewis Wilson and Douglas Croft as Batman and Robin. For 1949's *The New Adventures of Batman and Robin*, Robert Lowery and John Duncan took over the familiar roles.

"The first one had J. Carroll Naish in it," Kane recalls, "and he was a terrific actor. He was Irish, although he always played Italians. In this one, he was a Japanese spy [the diabolical Dr. Daka].

(continued on page 52)

Art Bob Kane

Art Bob Kane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The Devil & Ann Nocenti

Taking a "Longshot" at the Man without Fear has paid off for this offbeat storyteller.

By DREW BITTNER

One of them is an eternal optimist, innocent, cheerful and fun-loving, who always seem to fall face-first into trouble; the other has lost his innocence and most of his optimism, his current hard times made worse by battling hordes of supervillains and a host of personal problems. The first is an alien stuntman, while the other is a disbarred human lawyer.

So what do they have in common?

The answer is that both books, *Longshot* and *Daredevil*, are written by Ann Nocenti. Now a full-time freelance writer after a stint as editor of Marvel's mutant titles, her writing credits currently include the *Longshot* mini-series, the *Inhumans* graphic novel, the *Someplace Strange* graphic novel, a Colossus serial for *Marvel Comics Presents* and several back-up stories for *Classic X-Men*.

Nocenti's latest project for Marvel is the new, ongoing *Longshot* book, based on the mini-series she co-created with Art Adams. The character rapidly became a fan favorite, his popularity earning him a place as a member of the X-Men. Now, the lucky alien has gained a monthly title of his own, for which his creators are reuniting.

"He's there, he's the same guy, and we're telling more stories about him," Nocenti says. "*Longshot*'s going to be very light and play to Art's strengths; let him fool around, have it not be realistic at all. I want to let it be fun and have a rough and tumble nature to it, where it just falls wherever it does."

She adds that continuity fans shouldn't expect to see plotlines revived from the limited series. Though the character is the same, she says, the comic will not be.

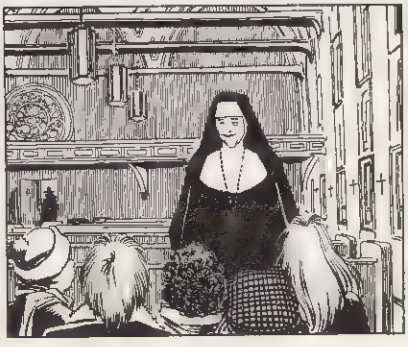
"The book won't pick up where the mini-series left off. Since we did the mini-series, I've changed and Art has changed. *Longshot*'s going to be in the same tradition of a man without a past or a future, an alien who doesn't know who he is—a complete identity crisis character. It'll be vaguely existential."

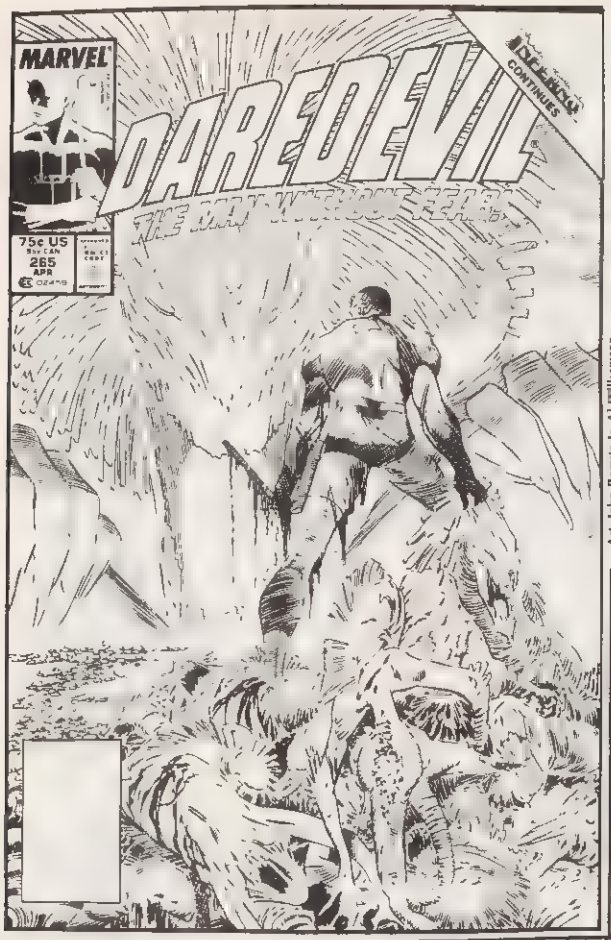
As for his upcoming adventures, Nocenti admits she hasn't plotted too far in advance, though his means of getting

Just one of the many things that attract Nocenti to Daredevil: his "being very Christian but wearing a devil suit."

Art: John Romita Jr. & Al Williamson

All Daredevil, Longshot, Someplace Strange Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1987, 1988, 1988 Marvel Entertainment Group





Art John Romita Jr.-Al Williamson

Art John Romita Jr. Al Williamson

Now that he has conquered all the demons the "Inferno" had to offer, Daredevil only has his own personal ones to face.

involved in adventures will be the same.

"He's going to tumble through them, like a puppy who just follows adventure," she says. "A sick puppy, that is.

"We're going to have crossovers an awful lot; the first issue will have the X-Men in it, and basically, whoever Art feels like drawing."

Longshot will also feature the return of some of the mini-series' memorable supporting characters. "Mojo is returning, definitely. Spiral and Ricochet Rita, too," she reveals. "Probably just those three."

As light as *Longshot* is likely to be, its flip side can be found in the adventures of a crimson-clothed vigilante Nocenti has been writing since the departure of Frank Miller (page 46). But, she says, there were no problems picking up where Miller left off on *Daredevil*.

"I don't remember any problems. I've talked to Frank about what he would have done and about what I did. We've

Despite all the battles, Nocenti says that *Daredevil* "is not necessarily glorifying violence so much as glorifying fighting for the right thing."

had some vague conversations about it, but I just had my own stories I wanted to tell, some strange, dark stories."

She got involved with the title almost by accident. After submitting a story to *Daredevil* editor Ralph Macchio, she was offered the book as a permanent writing assignment shortly after Miller decided to leave.

"There was a C.I.A. renegade story called 'American Dreamer' I did with Barry Windsor-Smith. Barry and I wanted to do a story together and it went around to Ralph. We had done that issue as a fill-in before Frank left, and when he did leave, Ralph asked me to do the book.

"Daredevil was a character who always intrigued me," she confesses, "and I felt I could get a better grip on him than on some more cosmic character. I liked the fact that he was close to the street. He lives in New York and I live in New York. It seemed perfect, actually. And that was that. After I had the book, I did the Rotgut stories, some voodoo and crack stories, just the ones I wanted to do."

Unfortunately, all wasn't smooth sailing on her first regular title. "The problem then was I didn't have a regular artist so I had to do single or double issue stories, and I couldn't develop continuity. Things started to cook when I knew I had Johnny [Romita Jr., *Daredevil* penciller]. Then, I began to develop a whole cast of characters, like Bullet, Bushwacker, Typhoid Mary and the Kingpin."

With that cast assembled, she reviewed what had gone before and settled in with her new artist to attend to Daredevil's new continuity.

"I looked at what Frank did and thought that he was trying to say something about Daredevil," she relates, "that he should be small, just hanging out in the streets of Hell's Kitchen, helping regular folks. I tried to respect what he did and where he left the character. It seemed fine to me."

She adds that Daredevil's situation, falling from being a successful attorney to being virtually a vagabond wasn't a problem either. She felt she had plenty of stories to tell and his position in life wasn't a barrier to telling them.

"Continuity's never a problem, because it takes only one issue to change it. Characters sometimes speak and demand certain stories to be told about them, but most of the time you use characters to tell stories," she says. "No matter what kind of position Daredevil was in, it would only take one page to get him where you want him.

"*Daredevil*'s an extremely dark book," Nocenti says, "and it's almost supposed to stay that way. That's what people expect when they buy *Daredevil*."

His being a lawyer and a vigilante at the same time was one of many core contradictions that attracted her to Daredevil. Paradoxes, she remarks, are "his whole schtick. He has about three or four other completely paradoxical and schizophrenic things happening in his character, everything from being very Christian but wearing a devil suit to promising not to fight but fighting, and so on. There are all these incredible paradoxes built into one person, which makes him a great character to write because he can just walk into a room and he's in conflict. He's great for that."

This internal conflict, she notes, also helps generate material for the book.

"You can take any aspect of that conflict, any angle. Hold a mirror up to him and any six or 10 of those contradictions and you have a story," Nocenti says. "Maybe it's just because I write him, but he's an incredibly interesting character."

Looking toward the future, Nocenti has large plans for the self-proclaimed protector of Hell's Kitchen.

"What I'm going to do with him next is

Art: Arthur Adams

"Longshot is *definitely* based on Art Adams," says Nocenti. "I saw that the first time he did it. He had the same hairstyle and everything."

Art: Arthur Adams

Who's going to guest star in *Longshot*? "Basically, whoever Art feels like drawing."

take him on a quest," Nocenti says. "Daredevil needs to figure out how to attack back, how to go after the Kingpin. I have to take him on the road.

"He really has nothing left," explains Nocenti, "so he leaves Manhattan, goes out into smalltown America and just lives. I'm thinking of getting him involved with some terrorist groups and some displaced and dissatisfied Americans.

Art: John Romita Jr. Al Williamson

He's going to be the cowboy who rides into town, and anything can happen."

Among other recent work is *Someplace Strange*, a graphic novel she did with John Bolton. Set outside the Marvel Universe, it is the story of two boys and a girl who end up in a bizarre magical land.

"Different reviews call it different things. One said it's David Lynch's *Wizard of Oz*, or it's a dark *Alice in Wonderland* by Steven Spielberg. People have been trying to decide what it is and they've been smashing several things together doing it.

"Doing the book was a blast," she adds. "We're thinking of doing a second installment, but there are things we want to do first, and then we'll probably do *Someplace Else Strange*."

Whatever turns she takes in her approach to a story, she remains committed to the idea of collaboration, saying the artist is a large factor in how she constructs a story.

"For one thing, you play the artist's strengths. You know them personally, usually, so you know what they like to do, and once you know that, they're great," Nocenti says. "The artists are great storytellers and you need their help. It's not a dictatorial medium, it's a *collaborative* medium.

"I like working that way," she comments. "I really enjoy working with all of them. I enjoy working with Art because the stories are so full of life and fun. Rick [Leonardi, *X-Men* artist] is wonderful with caricature, and the Colossus serial was strongly influenced by Rick's interest in Russia. John Romita Jr. is incredible to work with. He tells the best stories in comics, always the most incredibly clear, elegant, beautiful storytelling; it's really amazing work.

"With John Bolton, on the *Classic X-Men* [back-up] stories, I would just do them, and then John would call up and say, 'I want to draw a wax museum,' or 'I want to draw whatever.' Then, I would work a story around it. We do a different genre every month in *Classic*; we'll do some horror, then a '50s-pulp kind of thing, then a masquerade ball."

Nocenti adds that collaboration can fall by the wayside if the team gets far behind on a book, but that there's always a partnership in getting a book done.

"There's an innate, unspoken collaboration just in that you see what they give you. You see what they enjoy doing as compared to what they *don't* enjoy doing, you see what they react to," she says. "I wouldn't give Art the kind of story I would give Johnny, or Johnny the kind of story I would give Rick Leonardi; it's completely inspired by what I know they like to do and can do. To me, one of the really nice things about comics is just figuring out what would work best between the two of you. It's all who they are; they're all very different and you have to take that into account."

The moral message of her comics is something Ann Nocenti takes very seriously. The violence inherent in the superhero genre has its justifications, but it also presents her, as a writer, with

Art: John Romita Jr./ Al Williamson

Art, John Bolton

Someplace Strange **"doesn't have the stuff in it that usually sells," Nocenti confesses, "but we liked doing it."**

way of avoiding it and making worse, or you can try and tell stories that in sneaky ways knock it down a few pegs, stories that *don't* glorify it, or make it seem slightly egotistical or slightly repulsive that your character did this or that, without hurting the character. But you have to make all of that come out of the character."

As a female writer in a field where violence is a major theme, "maybe I react to the violence more," she comments. "Maybe that's why I do stories where I've

(continued on page 52)

some difficult moments.

"Moral righteousness is the stuff everybody tries to avoid talking about, because then you would have a collapse of the whole genre. The idea that these people who put on these suits and go out there are egotistical, egomaniacal, attention-getting narcissists... The list goes on. If you analyze it in terms of real personalities, you've got problems. But that's why comics aren't realistic; we're dealing in huge symbols. It's OK that they put these suits on like it's OK for the Statue of Liberty to stand in the middle of the water with her arm straight up. That's a symbol for justice.

"Justice actually happens in very small, little, human ways," she adds. "You can look at comics realistically, but then you have to stop and say it's ridiculous. I've done many stories where I've tried to come to terms with my own problems writing in this genre."

One of her problems involves the use, and therefore the meaning, of violence as a solution to problems. "Basically, you *have* to have a fight. If people are buying a superhero comic, you should give them what they're buying. So, there must be a fight, some problems *have* to be resolved through conflict. That's a hard thing to live with and to wrap a story around. I've done a number of stories where I've tried to come to terms with that even in myself, the fact that I was writing this stuff. I've had Daredevil find time to march in a peace parade and end up fighting all the way through an anti-nuke demonstration. He goes and crashes through a banner like a missile. This is my own self trying to deal with the fact that I'm writing in such a genre.

"It's a completely compromised situation that you're in by writing superhero material. You can make it plain old fun and have a blast with it, but that's one

"This whole trip with the Typhoid Mary and Karen Page triangle, with the Kingpin there—it's so hot I almost don't want to touch it," Nocenti admits.

Art, John Romita Jr., Al Williamson

THOUGHT BALLOONS

Frank Miller's Dark Knight Dreams

One reason comic books have earned unprecedented media attention is due to Frank Miller. He has revitalized such longtime characters as Daredevil and Batman. He has experimented with new forms of graphic storytelling (like Ronin). And he has championed the works of other storytellers (like Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima's Lone Wolf & Cub & various Japanese manga), all while standing against the specter of censorship. And always, Frank Miller has something to say.

COMICS SCENE: As the writer/artist of *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, how great has the impact of that title been on comics directed at grownups?

FRANK MILLER: It's hard to tell, because a number of other sophisticated comics started coming out at roughly the same time. There was Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen*, there was my *Dark Knight*, there was my and Bill Sienkiewicz's *Elektra: Assassin*. There were several other things that jarred the whole industry and garnered, as a whole, a new level of attention. You might say that in 1986, American comics went through what they had already gone through in Europe and Japan, which is that comics entered into an adolescence. The word is spreading throughout America that comics can do much more than Saturday-morning-cartoon kinds of stories. In the case of *Dark Knight*, I think it was the fact that I was using such an old, revered superhero, Batman, that got it so much publicity, because I was doing such unusual things with the character. But the publicity for comics has been enormous

The obscenity bust [at Friendly Frank's of Lansing, Illinois, a store since closed] has everything to do with the sort of shock that's spreading as far as comics being something new. A couple of cops came into that comics shop and bought some old undergrounds that were being held behind the counter so little kids couldn't get to

Art: Frank Miller, Klaus Janson/Colors: Lynn Varley

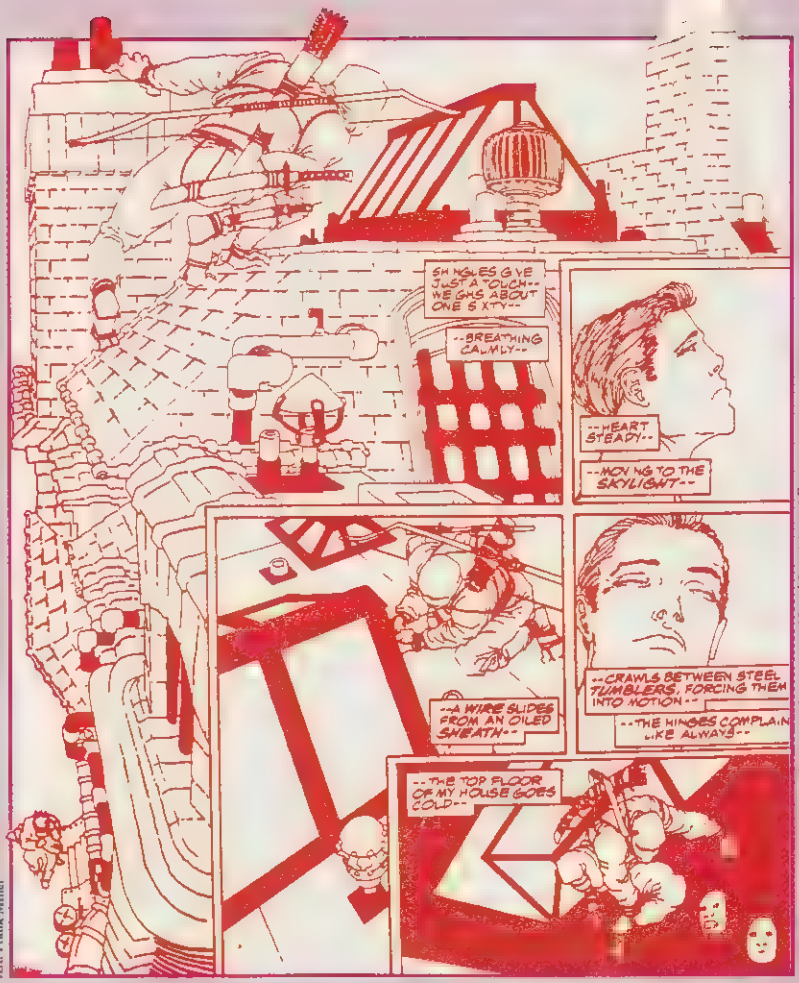
With his much-delayed *Elektra* Graphic Novel, Miller will continue to haunt the boundaries of comics as he resurrects his ninja warrior for a ghostly tale.

them. Through a series of circumstances that were pretty odd and confusing, somehow the shop manager got convicted for obscenity charges. The comics in question, most of them around 20 years old, are generally revered by aficionados of comics as some of the finest examples of comic art, Robert Crumb's in particular.

So, their targets were comic books that *weren't* written for little kids, that *aren't* sold to little kids, that have *nothing to do* with little kids. But since they're in a pamphlet and they have pictures in little panels with word balloons coming out of them, they naturally assumed they had to be kid stuff. Even Garry Trudeau's accomplishments have impressed some people on how flexible the art form is.

CS: There has always been a division in this country between comic strips and comic books.

MILLER: There's a *specific* difference between comic strips and comic books. A strip is generally no more than eight frames long, and a comic book is a pamphlet or book that holds page after page of extended stories. The comic book is much the more flexible form, one that is capable of conveying much more complicated stories and much more involved ideas. But the main separation between them is a business one. Comic strips have always been affiliated with newspapers, and there have been *no* restrictions as far as them being for little kids. Comic books, on the other hand, were put together by some pretty low-level businessmen who never really believed in them to begin with and sold them out every chance they got. From the '50s on, comics were sold down the river to McCarthy types. It's one of the reasons comics have been regarded for so long as kid stuff in America, while regarded as a genuine story form in other countries.


SHINGLES GIVE JUST A "CLICK"-- WE GHS ABOUT ONE SIXTY--
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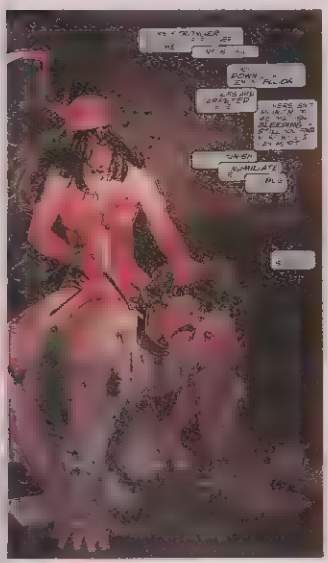
--HEART STEADY--
--MOVING TO THE SKYLIGHT--
--A WIRE SLIDES FROM AN OILED SHEATH--
--CRAWLS BETWEEN STEEL TUMBLERS, FORCING THEM INTO MOTION--
--THE HINGES COMPLAIN LIKE ALWAYS--
--THE TOP FLOOR OF MY HOUSE GOES COLD--

Art: Frank Miller

Elektra Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1987 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group



Art: Bill Sienkiewicz

There's something that should have been patently obvious from the beginning. Comics is a story form, not a genre, not a single little business with a single little audience, at least that's not all it should be. What has happened over the past few years is that a new audience has emerged—different people who grew up reading comics and stuck with them. People like me. Some of us started doing them and many of us kept reading them, and the work of writers like Alan Moore and artists like Bill Sienkiewicz and others exploded out of this very congested, incestuous business comics have been since the '50s.

"The word is spreading throughout America that comics can do much more than Saturday-morning-cartoon kinds of stories," says the author of *Elektra: Assassin*.

CS: Do you see the Friendly Frank's case as the opening wedge in a new wave of censorship directed at comics?

MILLER: I think it conceivably could be, for two main reasons. I think that it's really up to the people who make the comics to turn this around. I hate to keep beating this point to death, but the first reason is that the comic book publishers are cowards who don't believe in what they're publishing. Most of them, that is, the ones that have been publishing the longest time. The second reason is that censors are a really despicable lot. They'll always use children as an excuse, poor children being in danger, in order to obtain their power over what's being printed or being seen.

Children have nothing to do with their goals; children have nothing to do with the goals of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell and the rest. *Power* is all they're after. And this case in Lansing, Illinois, where a stupid decision was made in a heavily Fundamentalist small town, could encourage others to come out of the woodwork. That's one of the dangers in publicizing it. On the other hand, I think that the people doing comic books right now—the people writing and drawing them—believe in what they're doing enough to fight for it.

CS: Why should an adult who has never looked at comics since he or she was 10 years old pick up a comic book today?

MILLER: Because there are some very good stories being written in comics. Comics are capable of everything novels are, everything film is. It's a very different read, but I think that what you'll find that's happening right now in comics is exciting; it's the growth of a very vital art form, and it's also a great deal of fun.

—*Bill Warren*

Art: Frank Miller-Klaus Janson/Colors: Lynn Varley Dark Knight Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1986 DC Comics Inc.

Mike Grell's version of 007 will resemble Ian Fleming's original model for James Bond, songwriter Hoagy Carmichael. "And I've added the scar that Fleming always described," he says.

Her Majesty's Secret Servant

Mike Grell is handing 007 his latest assignment, and this time, the gadgets are real.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

The name is Grell. Mike Grell. Licensed to write and draw. And now, Grell is coming out from under deep cover to brief Agent CS6 on James Bond's latest mission, *Kiss, Kiss, Bang, Bang*.

The world's best known secret agent is being brought to life in a three-part miniseries from Eclipse Comics, with the promise of more to follow as the creator of *Sable* and *Green Arrow: The Longbow Hunters* sets his sights on Ian Fleming's greatest creation.

"I'm trying to take James Bond as an icon, and give the audience something that will please fans of both the literary and cinematic Bond," says Grell. "Thankfully, I don't have special FX to work with, so I'm forced to rely on a good solid plot and well-developed characters. I did such a good job on the villains and the supporting cast, that I had to go back and make *Bond* a little more interesting!"

The three issues are not necessarily three disconnected episodes. "The first story definitely connects to the second one," he explains. "The first two books stand relatively well on their own, but the third issue reveals what it's all about. This is a fairly complex story, dealing with characterization as opposed to unnecessarily flamboyant plot.

"The gimmicks and gadgetry are all real-world objects and items, they're technology already in use—at least in a prototype stage—otherwise, I wouldn't touch them. So, it's not a stretch of the imagination to believe that this could actually be happening. Some of the characters are a little more flamboyant than necessary, but then, Bond is more flamboyant than any real-life secret agent could possibly be. In reality, someone as highly visible as Bond would survive possibly a week before they put a gun in his ear and pull the trigger many, many times!"

Grell's brush with Bond actually came about when Richard Ashford, the publisher of Acme Press (which puts out Britain's comic newspaper *Speakeasy*), phoned Grell, impressed with his success on *Sable* and *Longbow Hunters*, and offered him the chance to do James Bond—which Grell immediately accepted. Ashford had spoken with Glidrose, the company that controls literary rights to Bond. "They had decided it was time to do James Bond as an illustrated feature," Grell explains. "It may have had to do with the changes that have come about in the publishing industry, books that deal with adult subject matter in a frank manner. But it was an idea whose time had come."

Ashford wanted to publish jointly with an American publisher, to make use of the American distribution system, and Grell suggested Eclipse. Grell had always wanted to work with Eclipse publisher Dean Mullaney, he confesses, and had always had a mutual respect for editor cat yronwode. "The only thing that had prevented me from doing a project with Eclipse was scheduling and timing," he explains, but notes that he is being assisted with Bond by Dameon Willich, with coloring by Julia Lacquement and lettering by Wayne Truman.

James Bond has actually starred in his own daily comic strip in London's *Daily Express*, which began in 1957 with stories which adapted the Ian Fleming novels before moving onto the original works it used until its cancellation 20 years later. Several films have also been translated into the comics, beginning with the

Showcase adaptation of *Dr. No* from DC and continuing through Marvel versions of *For Your Eyes Only* and *Octopussy*, though Grell considers them failures.

"The nature of the character and the stories they were adapting were *beyond* the scope of the package they were trying to sell it in. The comic strip was very good; the advantage of a comic strip is that they could take as much time as necessary to tell the story properly," he says, noting that most comic books run from 32 to 64 pages.

"When Roger Moore took over, the movies' storylines changed from Ian Fleming's original approach, which was high in characterization, to a more cinematic approach, high in gadgetry and special FX gimmicks; FX gimmicks are a crashing bore," says Grell. He cites an example from *The Man With the Golden Gun*, in which Bond is chasing Scaramanga in his car. Then, 007 crosses a river via a ramp-to-ramp jump that sees his car turn 360-degrees and land on its wheels on the opposite ramp.

"That was done live in one shot, with no gimmicks, and it was spectacular in the movie. In a comic book, it would have been four panels across the page—big deal, ho-hum, on to the next action scene."

One of the stipulations for the new Bond series was that Grell could *not* adapt other novels or movies—it all had to be completely original material. "That was probably another reason why they came to me, because I had a track record. My *whole* career has been built on creator/writer/artist, which gave me the background to say I could write original stories. I also had a very successful track record of sales, which meant that Bond would probably sell well for the company."

At the same time, there were also some interesting limitations placed on his stories regarding which previous characters and creations could be employed. Says Grell, "The character of Q, the armorer, was featured in the novels as Major Geoffrey Boothroyd, a head of Special Branch. So, I can use Boothroyd, but the character recognized as Q from the movies is off-limits, because they regard *him* as a character developed *primarily* in films.

"I also can't use Ernst Stavro Blofeld or S.P.E.C.T.R.E. It's like saying, 'You can do the Lone Ranger, but you've gotta do him in a pickup truck.' It's a little hard doing the Lone Ranger without Silver. It loses a bit of the glamour, but it's also forcing me to look to the real world for my plots. But the headlines lately are every bit as interesting as one would ever want them to be, so I don't feel limited."

In fact, Grell is keeping close enough to the Bond mythos to provide everything that the audience will demand, including the girls and the villains. "There are *many* villains—one would never be enough for James Bond, would he?" Grell laughs.

All James Bond Art: Mike Grell/Copyright 1988 Eclipse Comics/Glidrose Productions

While readers will still see Miss Moneypenny, they shouldn't expect any appearances from Q, Blofeld or S.P.E.C.T.R.E., thanks to legal restrictions.

"There is certainly a central villain, in terms of what is expected of James Bond—there is very much a Bond mythos at work, and I can't stray very far from it. Everyone in the civilized world is likely to have some preconceived notion of what goes into a James Bond story, and one of those things is a suitable plot to warrant the attentions of Britain's top secret agent. They're not going to send him out on a messenger boy-type errand, and they're not going to send him out on small cases—if they *do* send him on something small, you can bet that by the time he's done, it will *become* a major case!

"We also have the traditional Bond femme fatales that he seems to find, become involved with, and drift away from quite easily. I'll be getting away from the misogynistic Ian Fleming approach to Bond's women. The worst case of that was Pussy Galore, who had been a lesbian until James Bond threw her into the hay and made a 'real woman' out of her. That was pretty stupid!" laughs Grell.

"The traditional James Bond villain goes along with that, characterized in the novels and films as a flamboyant, larger-than-life character, with goals that would far outreach any ordinary expectations. They're megalomaniacs who would attempt a plot at world domination

Grell believes his villains' goals shouldn't exceed any ordinary expectations, so he'll deal "much less with plots of world domination, and more of international intrigue and real-world espionage."

determined to see it through.

"The second book deals almost totally with his last-ditch efforts to get this woman freed, and bring her out from behind the Iron Curtain to make their escape. All the while, they're pursued by most of the Hungarian Army and Soviet troops, as well as one character who's looking specifically to kill him. It's a shoot-'em-up chase sequence in the tradition of the best Bond movies, and has a wrap-up that will leave the audience wanting more.

"And that's what they get with the third issue! Bond brings the woman to the U.S. to make the exchange for the rocket plans, and discovers just how deep this plot goes and its impact on the world, as a result of what he has just done. It's very convoluted, and things are never what they seem. I think I've developed some great characters, particularly the scien-

(continued on page 60)

because, for some stupid reason, they actually believe they can do it! I'll be dealing much less with plots of world domination, and more of international intrigue, real-world espionage and technology, and plots that, if they threaten anything worldwide, would be either ecological threats, or military plots that could propel us into World War III."

The first issue will serve as a basic introduction to James Bond and Grell says he is approaching it as a brand new medium and a brand new audience. *Kiss, Kiss, Bang, Bang*—the title is actually how the Italians have referred to 007—centers around Bond being assigned to bring a woman out from behind the Iron Curtain. She is the niece of a Czech scientist who had emigrated to the U.S. shortly after the Russian invasion.

"The scientist has developed a system of putting a space capsule into orbit at an extremely low cost. The system I'm using in the book has actually been built at the University of Washington—if it were built on a full scale, it could get the cost down to one pound sterling per kilogram," Grell explains.

"This scientist is willing to exchange his plans, which were developed without any government involvement, for his niece. Bond is assigned to bring her out of Hungary; he is chosen because his contact is to be the last in the very long line of progeny of his old friend Kerim Bey, who was featured in *From Russia With Love*. At the first story's end, Bond's mission has essentially been blown but he's

"What I want to do with Bond is provide more emphasis on the characterization, along with the plot," Grell says. "I feel they should be better balanced."

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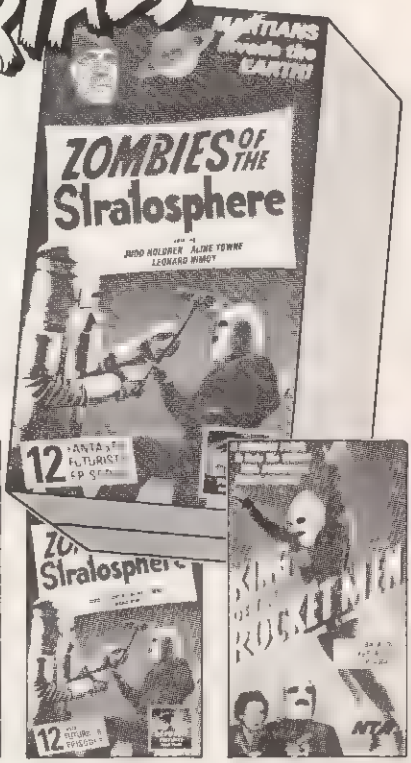

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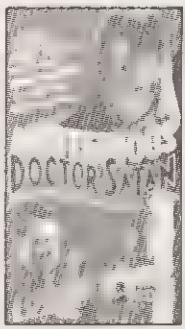

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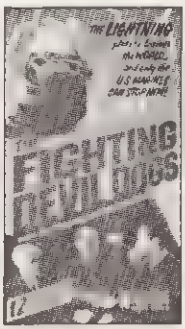

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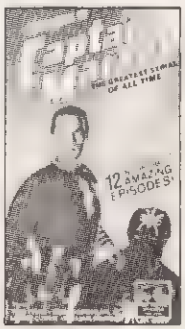

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Kane

(continued from page 39)

Probably the second serial was a little bit better than the first. Robert Lowery was pretty good. I thought he was better than the first guy."

Kane chuckles recalling a chance meeting with Lowery.

"I met him at a party when I came out here in '49," explains Kane, who now lives in California. "I said, 'Hi. I'm Bob Kane,' and I put out my hand. Lowery looked at me. He had had a few drinks, and he said, 'You're the son of a bitch who killed my career,' meaning that to play the famous superhero at times does end a career that might have gone elsewhere because you're so typed to the character. Adam West was typed in *Batman*. He couldn't outgrow it. Yet there's a dichotomy. While Adam West couldn't bridge the gap to more serious acting, Christopher Reeve was able to go from *Superman* to do movies with Michael Caine and Broadway shows. But generally, when an actor plays any famous person or fictional personage, they're typed. Unless they're famous to begin with, like James Cagney."

Another interesting chance encounter from those days led to the creation of reporter Vicki Vale, whom some fans have long believed was merely a copy of *Superman*'s Lois Lane. Although portrayed by Kim Basinger in the new *Batman*, in Bob Kane's mind, Vicki Vale will always be a different actress.

"I originally created Vicki Vale in the comic book in the '50s," he explains, "but I got her from Marilyn Monroe, whom I met in Hollywood. I first met her in '43, when she was Norma Jean. Six years later, I met her again, just before she started shooting. We went down to Santa Monica Beach. I drew some sketches of her at the beach and I brought them back to New York and said, 'Hey, here's the character of Vicki Vale.' So, she's actually in Marilyn's image. And now, 40 years later, Vicki Vale is in the movie."

After 50 years of living in the shadow of Batman's cape, Bob Kane is looking forward to having the spotlight (or is it the bat-signal?) fall on him. He has every confidence that the upcoming *Batman* film will be the catalyst that makes this 50th anniversary strike a high note.

"Batman is indelibly ingrained in people's minds all over the world," Bob Kane concludes. "I feel the movie will bring back Batman bigger than the TV show and *Dark Knight*. Sam Hamm's script is dynamic. Michael Keaton is a very versatile actor. Don't forget that from *Mr. Mom*, he did *Beetlejuice* in one guise, and then went into *Clean and Sober* as a drug addict. You will see him as a Bruce Wayne of the '80s. Jack Nicholson and Michael Keaton will work well together. It's a winning team." ■

TO BE CONTINUED

Moon Knight

(continued from page 11)

Art: W. Reinhold

editor] has pointed out that Mike Baron and I share the same habit: We tend to kill our villains. The readers fall in love with them and then we don't have them anymore. So, I'm going to leave some living so that I can have them back. I'll still kill them," he promises, chuckling. "They'll just live to see their full potential before I wipe them out."

However, Moon Knight won't be entirely alone in his attempts to stem this tide of terror. Although his connection with the West Coast Avengers has been completely severed, the silvery sentinel will still be able to find aid whenever he needs it, albeit not from the most powerful of quarters.

"He meets Spider-Man briefly in issue #2," Dixon notes. "Black Cat figures in #3 and #4, and if I'm allowed to, I would like to have her come in throughout the series. I like the male-female chemistry in things even if it isn't romantic involvement. Also, he'll be meeting the Punisher in issues #8 and #9, I believe; I still have to straighten that out continuity-wise with everybody here. I suppose he'll be meeting Daredevil because that just seems like a natural. And I want to show the fate of Brother Voodoo, since he used to appear in *Moon Knight* quite regularly. But, he's *not* going to meet Thor. Spider-Man is about the most powerful person he'll meet."

But why even commit such an effort to the title? After all, what could possibly be the attraction of a hero who will now be enjoying his third regular series in 10 years?

"Moon Knight seems to be a character that everybody likes," Chuck Dixon explains. "There's something about the costume. It has a universal appeal: the white, faceless mask, the hood, the cape, the whole bit. I think Moon Knight is a character that if we went back to our junior high school notebooks, we've all drawn him, whether we knew who it was or not." ■

Nocenti

(continued from page 45)

had to struggle with inane violence. I don't like glorifying it, but that's the medium. I haven't had any particular problems; no one has brought up my writing as being [stereotypically] 'female.' When I think of the other women I know, Jo Duffy and Louise Simonson, we're all just writing stories. Nobody ever said, 'They're girls, they can't write comics.' I haven't faced any prejudicial treatment."

Before gaining a solid reputation as a writer, Nocenti was hired in 1981 to be an assistant to then-managing editor Jim Shooter. By the time she became an editor, she was writing stories which she submitted to other editors.

"I didn't read comic books until I started to edit them," Nocenti says. "That probably sounds horrible but it's true. I got the job and just took it from there. I liked seeing words and pictures, how they fit together.

"I had never really considered the medium before, but it seemed it was an interesting new way to tell a story for me. Right away, I started working, writing stories on my own. I did mostly the mutant books, the *X-Men* line, and then I quit" in late 1987, to become a full-time freelancer.

Besides her monthly comic assignments from Marvel, there are also several comic book projects yet to be finalized with a variety of people.

"I have some stories planned with John Bolton that I don't really want to talk about yet. We want to do some erotic stories, some horror stories. It's going to be somewhere between symbolism and surrealism, in terms of the artwork. It's still evolving, so it's hard to tell what it will be like. I'm also supposed to be doing a series with Jon Bogdanove. That's in the planning stages.

"When you're doing regular comics, they tend to write themselves," explains Ann Nocenti. "There are a million plot threads, they could go a million different ways. You might wake up with a great idea, and sometimes they take months.

"You can approach a story from a really abstract viewpoint: a phrase in your head can turn into a story. 'The ashes are falling,' for example. Sometimes, it's something specifically you want to say about a particular issue. I did a toxic waste story when I couldn't go into one of my favorite rivers upstate because it had gotten too polluted. Something happens in your life and you can write about it, something you want people to know about that interests you; I want to do an animal rights story, because I was bugged when I heard some things about how animals are treated. Sometimes, the ideas run around in your head and turn into a story, completely bizarre and out of left field, where two elements collide and you realize you have something *really* interesting." ■

She-Devil With . . . A Skateboard?

By SCOTT LOBDELL

Leapin' Lizards! "Red Sonja" artist Frank Thorne has conjured up an all-new warrior wench—the reptilian "Ribit!"

The warrior woman is a statuesque, voluptuous creature of almost impossible beauty. Possessed of full pouting lips set in a face that is both innocent yet knowing, her visage is framed in locks of silken alabaster. The avenging amazon wields a broadsword nearly half the length of her body, standing ever ready to cleave any manner of villain who might dare to violate the temple that she is sworn to defend . . ."

This is but one of many passages that won't be found anywhere in the pages of *Ribit!* Why? Because this four issue mini-series from Comico doesn't feature the prototypical heroine one might expect from the creator of such bountifully buxom "babes" as Ghita of Alizarr, Danger Rangerette and *Playboy*'s Moonshine McJugs. Instead, writer, illustrator, letterer and colorist Frank Thorne marks his return to comics with the creation of a two-and-a-half-foot tall, green lizard-turned-warrior woman known as Ribit!

"Ribit is so small because at the very outset she's a familiar of Sahtee, the last sorceress of the Crystal Orb," explains Thorne, as if it's all a matter of course. It is this approach, that he's simply relating events that occur naturally in this fantasy world, which provides cohesion to a story that weaves together such diverse elements as sword, sorcery, science and silliness. "She was the pet lizard and companion of Thogroanus, the stalwart minion of the sorceress. Ribit leapt into a mystical brew because she couldn't bear the thought of not being part of the creation of a mighty warrior woman to go against the chrome-clad warlord. But owing to the improper mixture, she comes out stunted in growth.

"She's put to the test, and although she's small, she's ornery enough and thereby capable of doing everything that a fully grown warrior woman can do," explains Thorne. But in Ribit's unnamed world, "everything" can range from skateboarding through bullet-ridden confrontations with parademonic soldiers sequestered in Nazi war tanks to slashing away at 20-foot tall automated constructs with nothing more than a dagger. Compounding the conflicts she faces in her transition from froggy familiar to femme fatale, Ribit slowly learns how to speak like the humans to which she now bears a passing, if miniature, resemblance. Whether her adventures take place in Earth's post-Apocalyptic future or in a fantasy world with many similar at-

Photo Dennis Harrold

Any resemblance between *Ribit!*'s mage Boomer Fen and Frank Thorne, with Linda Behrle as Sargasso, is purely intentional.

tributes is a question Thorne isn't willing to answer—not because he's being secretive, but because he has no idea.

"I had mused over that and fretted somewhat over how I was going to connect characters in the Metal Forest to the Nazi war machines and the almost futuristic technology of the Gnomes," says Thorne. "I muddled along, not really knowing how, and found I didn't have to have an obvious mechanism for it. They seem to co-exist in that respect.

"It's not time travel or anything like that, but rather these are corresponding worlds," he suggests helpfully. Finally, with a laugh, he confesses, "I think it happens by default."

Because it has been said that a protagonist is only as interesting as the antagonist she faces, Thorne paid particular attention to the creation of the villain. Shorter than Arcade and more devious than Lex Luthor, Ribit's adversary of equally diminutive stature owes his reduced height to a more twisted origin.

"Vomick, the chrome-clad warrior and ruler of the Iron Citadel, was a normal, horrendous despot. He was transformed by magic into a Homunculus." Explaining the nature of the term, Thorne continues. "This means 'a diminutive human reduced by magical means.'

"A former student of Sahtee's, the politically motivated Vomick cast out all the functionaries of magic in the Court and went instead to modern technology. In response, a renegade conjurer and haranguer of bumptious spirits named Boomer Fenn turned him into what looks like a half-man, half-monkey." Thorne neglects to mention the braces used to straighten the vain tyrant's teeth

It is during the height of Vomick's campaign to crush all practitioners of magic that the united kingdoms of gnomes, sorcerers, aquatic dwellers, and many other denizens of this fantasy realm, desperately need not only a symbol of strength, but more importantly, an actual warrior able to defend them in their darkest hour. They were half-expecting "a monster, an unstoppable giant or a goblin of mammoth proportions," but they're forced to put their faith and future in the hands of a green-skinned dynamo less than three feet tall

While all these magical terms and newly revealed ancient history might prove confusing to readers, Thorne promises that everything will eventually be made clear. "You'll get a small education in mystical things. For instance, I make asides about lifestyles of gnomes. I decree that queen gnomes tend to be bibulous, and in the case of Queen Calliope, addicted to video games. I reveal aspects of mermaids' lives." But before a reader runs to the bookshelf to verify these facts in an *Encyclopedia*

Noble Thogroanus is a minion with one good eye for beauty, who doesn't mind when his pet lizard gets human.

of the Fairy Kingdom, Thorne's jovial disclaimer should be taken into account. "Most of this stuff I make up. So, I guess it only has a *limited* educational appeal."

Thorne has been making things up for the past 10 years, ever since his nearly 25-issue run of Marvel's *Red Sonja* firmly established him as a premier artist of the '70s While the series was that rarest of all creatures, a commercially successful

comic featuring the exploits of a female character, Thorne cuts through all the analysis by explaining, "It was a fluke.

"Up until then, I had done *Tomahawk*, *Son of Tarzan*, *Son of Someone Who Knew Tarzan* and some other stuff, but I don't know how good I was at doing that I was doing journeyman work. In fact, I would probably, to this day, be the world's worst guy to draw superheroes. I don't think my heart would be in it, although maybe I could psyche myself into it.

"I've really always been more or less aloof from what is today described as 'mainstream' comics," reveals Thorne "I've never read *The X-Men*, I can't even tell you who they are. My memory of 'mainstream' goes back to C.C. Beck and *Jo Jo Comics*, and the original *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*. That's when the fires ignited, and they're still burning.

"I would probably still be aloof from the mainstream, working on the fringes, if not for the success of *Red Sonja* and my involvement in it. Something clicked between Sonja and me, and it threw open the doors to something else."

Ironically, it was this same success that prompted his discontent with the comics industry. "My involvement with the success of *Red Sonja* created frustrations for me in the early days of creator ownership. The graphic novel as it is defined today was just being talked about then, with very few publishers actually doing them.

"If you've taken the route that I've taken over the past decade, when you're trying to own your own properties, maintain copyrights, and have control over things, most of the larger publishers have no interest in dealing or working with you. While I understand things are better now, this all took place during the dark ages of the creator's attempts to own his own creation.

"I went on to do less Sonja and more of my own creation, Ghita of Alizarr, for Warren Magazines. Ghita also 'had legs' as they say in *Variety*, which gave me an opportunity to create Danger Rangerette " His portrayal of Ghita, a sort of second generation Sonja with a distinctively lustful edge and an ample display of cleavage, garnered Thorne the attention of *Playboy*. While their relationship would prove mutually beneficial, eventually leading to a live-action spin-off of Moonshine McJugs on the Playboy Chan-

"I went so far as to make Rib 'flat chested,' " Thorne attests, hoping to avoid the criticisms directed at his past work. Still, she does have a big gun.

THE PURSUERS ARE MET WITH A BARRAGE OF SIZABLE STONES AND ROCKS.
RIBIT GET MADD!
YU DED MEAT!
PAHMM...
IN A FURY, THE HALF-PINT RAGES ON. THEN, A DARK FORM LOOMS BEHIND HER
..FALKING GEEKS!
OH...
SHUIT!

While she's no Red Sonja, Ribit is a mean green mudda!

All Ribit Art: By & Copyright 1986, 1987 Frank Thorne/Courtesy Frank Thorne & Comico

nel as well as a 1981 award for the magazine's best comic, it required that Thorne temporarily abandon his personal quest in deference to the trappings of commercial success.

"Here I was boasting what a hero I was, in forging out there and getting copyrights and owning stuff, then *Playboy* made their offer. The discussions with Hugh Hefner were so seductive that I signed over the rights to *Moonshine* to him," Thorne explains.

Whereas others have left Marvel Comics with a bitter taste in their mouths, the perpetually amiable Thorne is quick to point out, "I've had wonderful relationships with Marvel, although they were very limited I left on good terms."

It was at a backyard party in 1986, at the home of letterer John Workman, that Epic Comics editor Archie Goodwin talked to Thorne about developing something for Marvel's creator-owned division. When negotiations broke down between Thorne and Marvel (the 50-50 split of foreign rights being among the reasons), Goodwin suggested he bring what would later become *Ribit!* to Comico.

The project has taken so long because, "the people at Comico were sharp enough to wait until I completed all four issues before printing the first," explains Thorne. When pressed for details revealing the slightest bit of tensions resulting from the teaming of a venerable master storyteller with the new kids on the publishing block, the most Thorne can muster is, "Editor-in-Chief Diana Schutz insisted that *Ribit!* was the series' natural title. Rib was already named, but I had been toying with the idea of calling the story *Spawn of Sorcery* or *Son of Spawn*. We'll see if she was right about adding the exclamation point."

Surprisingly, Ribit's otherworldly began on this world in an unlikely environment—the public library.

"What I've done, and what I often do when coming up with ideas or names, or the names of a piece, I go to the library and bring a notebook and just walk down the stalls It can be very depressing to see all these thousands of books. I feel as though I'm sort of feeding off this residue of culture in a sense as I jot down page after page of stray thoughts

"From there, I work mostly with typewriter paper and felt mark pens. I just start sketching out ideas, blending things together. Many times, I get caught up in an idea and it pounds in my brain and I just write it by impulse.

"*Ghita* was the first full-blooded writing I had done in that form and to that extent," Thorne reveals. "It was done impulsively and joyously and without any regard for chapter length. I loathe to say I'm a writer; instead, I've always said that I do the words.

"I dread the thought of someone asking me to write a novel or something because I know it would be terrible But in adjunct with the pictures, I'm allowed to tell a whole different story."

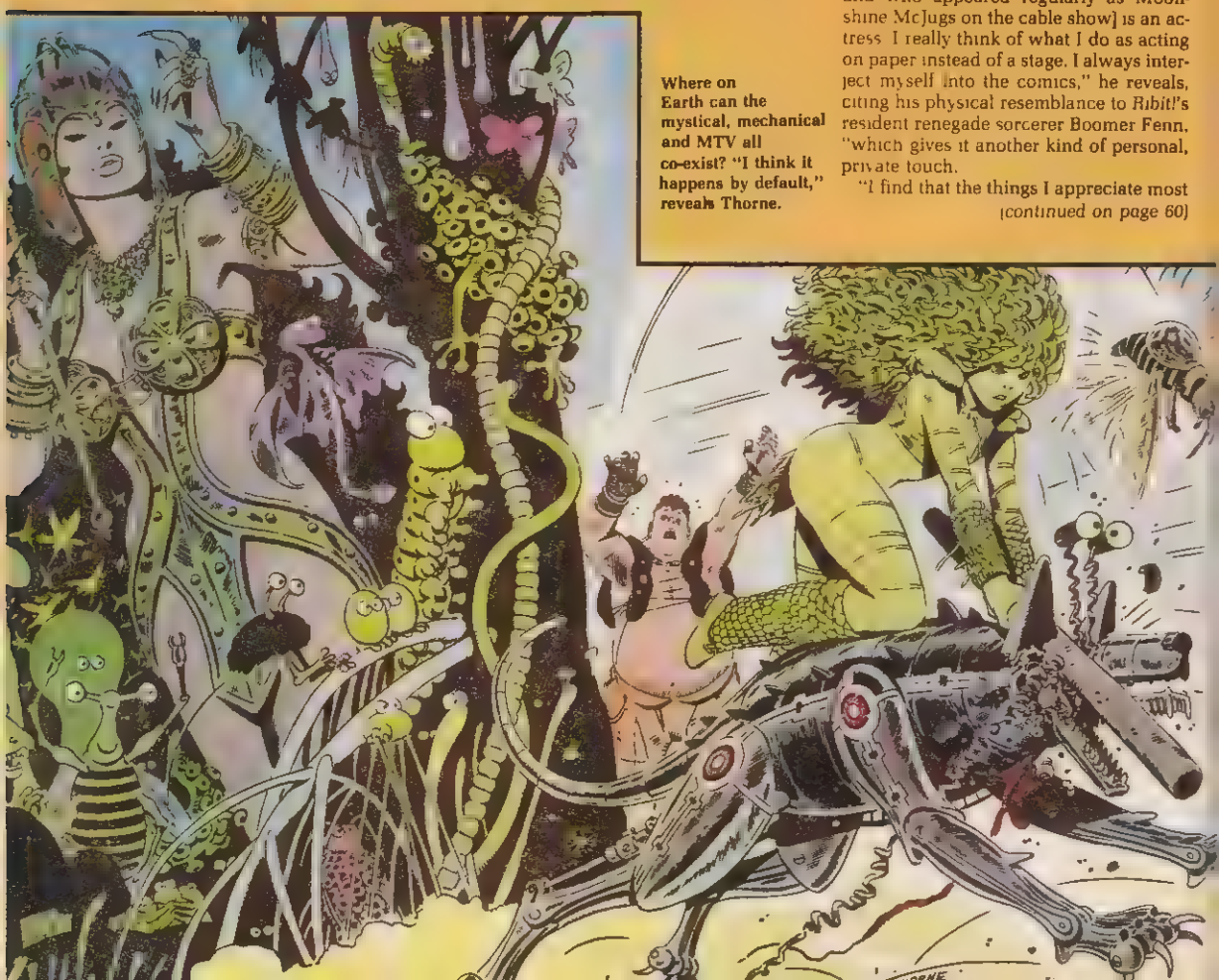
The stories that Thorne feels compelled to write are such that he would prefer to steer clear of such definitions as "mainstream" or "independent," opting instead for the term "personal."

"The best way to describe my stuff, is to call it 'mind theater,' " he explains. "I'm a frustrated, absolutely awful actor I can draw so-so, I can write the words by intuition and instinct, but combining them all is like producing a little theater.

"Most of my friends are actors and Linda [Behrle, a model has posed as] Ghita on the character's full-color poster and who appeared regularly as Moonshine McJugs on the cable show] is an actress I really think of what I do as acting on paper instead of a stage. I always interject myself into the comics," he reveals, citing his physical resemblance to *Ribit!*'s resident renegade sorcerer Boomer Fenn, "which gives it another kind of personal, private touch.

"I find that the things I appreciate most

(continued on page 60)



Where on Earth can the mystical, mechanical and MTV all co-exist? "I think it happens by default," reveals Thorne.

The Case of The Perforated Private Eye

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty have plotted their greatest crime: the murder of Ms. Tree!

Being a cult success gets *old* after a while!" So says Max Allan Collins, who feels this is the year that *Ms. Tree* may break through to a wider audience. A gala 50th issue, followed by a move to a bigger company, would indicate that his lady private investigator is heading for more widespread success in the coming year

Collins and artist Terry Beatty, co-creator of *Ms. Tree*, are celebrating the event with a special issue containing a portfolio from some of the finest artists in comics today, as well as a flexi-disc including the "Ms. Tree Theme" written by Collins and his longtime partner in the rock band Cruisin', Paul Thomas. The story itself is also a special one—it's the conclusion of "The Death of Ms. Tree." Not a promising way to begin the coming year, perhaps, but Collins is reassuring.

"There has been a certain amount of speculation that this would be the *literal* death of Ms. Tree, that the book would end and the character would be dead and buried. In fact, that's not the case. She does die in the story, but she doesn't die that *finally*," Collins laughs. "Fearless Fosdick died plenty of times, too!

"The story will culminate many themes and story threads; it will bring a number of characters back in what is essentially a dream-hallucination sequence, so that we can confront her with a number of the people she has 'dispatched.' It will also allow us to conclude a number of things we've dealt with over the years."

The series began as a feature in the black and white magazine *Eclipse Monthly*, and then spun off into its own comic. Along the way, Collins and Beatty have managed to set some precedents.

"We have a certain historical significance," Collins notes. "We were Eclipse's first regularly published comic book. I think we were part of the first crossover mini-series between two independent publishers, with *The P.I.s* [teaming Ms. Michael Tree with Mike Mauser from First's *E-Man*]. We were really the first feature that exercised the freedom that independent comics are supposed to have, which is that if a contact is up, and you feel you would like to try to do the book somewhere else, you can pick it up and move it, so, we've been at a number of publishers. I'm proud that we've broken a lot of ground, and I'm pleased that what Terry and I have done has been given a certain stamp of approval by a phenomenal group of artists who contributed special drawings to the portfolio in issue #50."

The portfolio section of the double-length book features artists drawing Ms. Tree, their own creations offering congratulations, or having their own creations actually meet the female detective. The contributors are: Peter Avanzino, Eddie (*Deadface*) Campbell, Paul (*Concrete*) Chadwick, Michael (*Silent Invasion*) Cherkas with a caption by writer Larry Hancock, Brian (*Kilgore*) Chin, Dan Day,

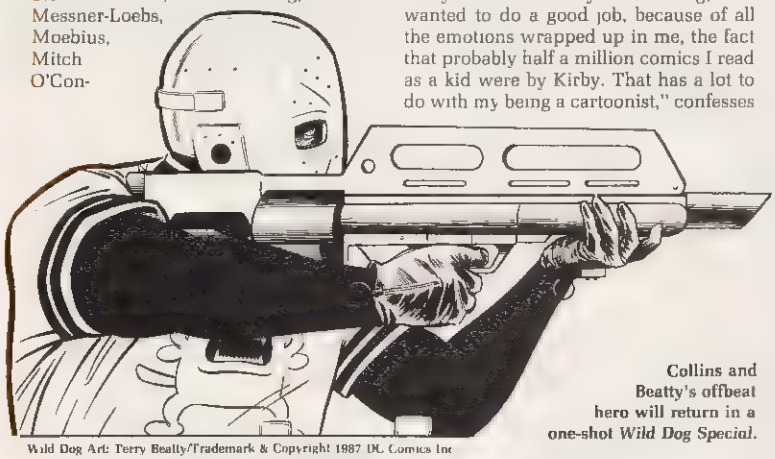
Art Terry Beatty

All Ms. Tree Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1988 Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty

Will Eisner, Chuck Fiala, George Freeman, Dennis Fujitake, Michael T. Gilbert, Brooks Hagan, Tim Hamilton, Jack Kirby, Batton Lash, Steve LeBlanc, Steve Leialoha, David Leong, William Messner-Loebs, Moebius, Mitch O'Connell, Michael H. Price, Josh Quagmire, Barb Rausch, Trina Robbins, Jim Shoop, Scott Shaw!, Stan Sakai, Howard Simpson, Joe Staton, Rick G. Taylor, Valentino, Mike Vosburg and Mark Wheatley.

The response to their request was overwhelming, says Terry Beatty, and they actually had to turn down some offers from artists. "We could have taken more drawings, but we would have had to put them two, three or four to a page—I really didn't want to do that. We actually will have a few drawings doubled up on a page, but they're small drawings."

The biggest thrill for him was inking a Captain Victory drawing by his hero, Jack Kirby. "It wasn't really intimidating, but I wanted to do a good job, because of all the emotions wrapped up in me, the fact that probably half a million comics I read as a kid were by Kirby. That has a lot to do with my being a cartoonist," confesses Beatty. "I just wanted it to look good, and I had a great time doing it!"



Wild Dog Art: Terry Beatty/Trademark & Copyright 1987 DC Comics Inc

Collins and Beatty's offbeat hero will return in a one-shot *Wild Dog Special*.

Not only will *Ms. Tree* be changing publishers after #50, but it will be changing formats as well.

"Issue #50 will be the last Renegade issue. We've been negotiating with one of the major companies to do *Ms. Tree* in a full-color format that will essentially be a series of regularly published, self-contained graphic novels.

"We've had a problem in the last two years because of the nature of the independent market, which has, in a number of respects, suffered. While some properties like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* have gone through the roof, some of us who are very well established have nonetheless had a hard go of it.

"Terry and I, in order to stay afloat as a creative team and to attract more readers to what we do, created our offbeat, costumed hero Wild Dog for DC. Trying to do both *Wild Dog* and *Ms. Tree* was a logistical nightmare. On paper, it looked like we could do it; in reality, it caused *Ms. Tree* to drop from 12 issues a year to eight or nine. So, there are many benefits in going to one of the major companies!"

Three Wild Dog serials have already appeared in *Action Comics Weekly*, and Collins and Beatty will be doing a one-shot *Wild Dog Special* for later this year. "We'll continue to do *Wild Dog* in a limited manner one mini-series or special a year—which DC seems to be interested in," says the writer. "That should allow us to produce this stuff without compromising the quality of the work or falling dreadfully behind deadlines."

Upcoming *Ms. Tree* stories will see some radical events, according to Collins. "Some major recurring characters will bite the dust; we hope to be a little more graphically unusual. We've always prided ourselves on a certain kind of straightforward storytelling, but we want to open it up a little bit.

The first new book is going to be a major story introducing a new recurring nemesis; a new mob figure will move into place. I have to admit being a little influenced by *Crime Story* and *Wiseguy*, and seeing how they bring in a villain, and keep him for a certain number of stories, then move on to a new villain. These will be self-contained stories that, when added up over a year or two, will be more than the sum of their parts.

"I also want to do something unlike anything I've done, something really steamy with *Ms. Tree* in the *Body Heat*-James M. Cain area. We're not going to give Howard Chaykin a run for his money or anything, but we'll do a little more than we've done in the past. Ms. Tree has become very cold because of the things that have happened to her, and I want to melt her in a major way."

A four-issue story had already been announced for issues #51-54, but with the shift in publisher and format, Collins says that story will be delayed for a while. "We originally projected a flashback to make it difficult for readers to tell whether or not we were really killing Ms. Tree off. We announced a serial for those issues about Michael Tree's first case, set seven or eight years ago. In her origin story, she obviously knows her way around a gun and is not intimidated by violence which

All Ms Tree Art Courtesy Terry Beatty

Art Paul Chadwick

The future looks brighter and more colorful for *Ms. Tree*—if she can make it past 50.

seems to imply she has had some experience in the past. I still *will* do that story, but it's not going to be the first graphic novel. It doesn't make any sense to do that story right away."

Collins is aware of another comic book death that involves him to a degree. During his brief stint writing *Batman*, he created a new origin for the late Jason Todd, and now he admits he has mixed emotions about the death of that Robin.

"I feel a certain amount of pride that my *Batman* was so unpopular that they had to kill that character off!" he laughs. "The catch-phrase on the *Ms. Tree* letter page is always 'It's just a story' nobody really got killed, let's not get too bent out of shape over it.

"On the other hand, 'recycling' *Dark Knight* endlessly is *not* a road I would have wanted to go down. I have never been comfortable with the serious, gritty Batman. The idea of Catwoman being a former prostitute is like doing *Peter Pan* with real pirates—it doesn't make any sense to me," Collins says.

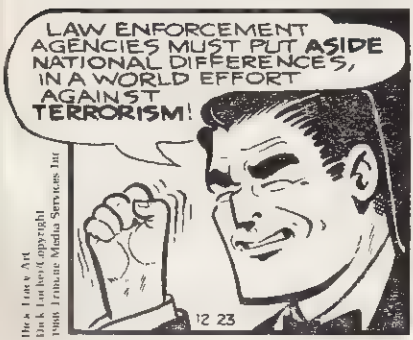
"DC screwed up long ago when they let Dick Grayson grow up, and brought in a new Robin. The problem with comics like *Batman* is that they bring in a multitude of writers, many of whom aren't familiar with each others' work on the project, and then somebody in an editorial position pretends that it's all one big story. It's nuts! It's like *Star Trek* fans who write these bibles based on episodes written by all of these different TV writers, none of whom probably watched anybody's show but the one they wrote—it's very silly!

"When I came aboard *Batman*, I said, 'Is there a bible for me to read on this, like a TV show bible?' They said, 'No.' 'Well, is there a layout of the Batcave?' 'No.' 'Well, where is stately Wayne Manor? Is it in Gotham City? Is it a mile from Gotham City? Is it 15 miles from Gotham City?' Nobody knew! They don't have any of this stuff down, codified. I'm told that my character is inconsistent with something that has gone before. Well, if they expose me to that, maybe I can be consistent with it! It's very disorganized.

Art: Mitch O'Connell

While they don't plan to compete with Howard Chaykin, Max Allan Collins and Terry Beatty are planning to make things steamy for Ms. Tree.

Whether he plans it or not, Collins' Dick Tracy strip often mirrors today's headlines.



Dick Tracy Art
Dick Tracy® Copyright
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"Of course, I quit the book -I probably would have been fired if I hadn't quit!" he laughs. "I had a whole story set up that would have involved Two-Face not the Joker. I established that Jason Todd's father had worked for Two-Face, and I had told [*Batman* Editor] Denny O'Neil that we would reveal that Two-Face had killed the father. I had things in mind, but nothing resembling what they did."

Ironically, Collins may again write the Batman. A licensed anthology book of Batman stories is in the works, he says, and "they're going to get mystery and science-fiction writers, names with bookstore recognition. No comics people are going to be writing it, with one possible exception: They have asked me."

Of course, Max Allan Collins continues to write the *Dick Tracy* comic strip, and is in the midst of a computer virus story. "Everybody is going to think I hopped on the bandwagon, but I turned my story synopsis in, and three weeks later, it was on the cover of *Time*! But I'll probably still be the first person to do a computer virus story."

He is also hoping to do another story in *Tracy* this year, one that he has wanted to do for a long time. "I'm hoping the syndicate will approve a story about drugs. They've never let me do a drug story, and I want to do a Tracy-busting-the-drug-kingpins type of story. It seems appropriate. I've tried from Day One, and they wouldn't let me. They say we'll be teaching kids about drugs, but I hardly think they're going to be reading *Dick Tracy* and say, 'Mommy, what's crack?' What can I say?"

Although his involvement with it is

(continued on page 66)

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Grell

(continued from page 50)

tist, Erik Widziadlo."

The ultimate compliment was paid to his story by Ian Fleming's old agent, Grell says. "He gave it high marks, and passed it with flying colors. While he was reading my synopsis, he looked up at me, smiled, and said, 'Right now, I'm envisioning how this will translate to the movie screen.' I'm very pleased with his reaction. If there was ever anyone whose approval I wanted on this, it would be his."

Grell visualizes his Bond as a combination of the literary and cinematic superspies. "My version will look like Ian Fleming's original model for James Bond, which was Hoagy ["Stardust"] Carmichael, the songwriter! Fleming described Bond as resembling a young Hoagy Carmichael, who—amazingly enough—resembles a young Sean Connery, although the jawline and nose are more like Timothy Dalton. And I've added the scar that Fleming always described."

Although the three-issue series will be self-contained, as anyone who sits through the credits of the films knows, James Bond always returns. The comic book is no exception. After the three bi-monthly issues, this summer will see an adaptation of the upcoming Bond film, *License to Kill*, packaged by Grell's Creative Fire Studio, with Richard Ashford, Chuck Austen, Tom Yeates and Michael Davis assisting Grell on the 44-page book for Eclipse.

There will be still more to follow that, however; nine months after the last part of *Kiss, Kiss, Bang, Bang*, another original three-part, bi-monthly Bond story will appear, followed by nine months off, and another original Bond, with the cycle to continue at that pace. Grell says the extent of his future involvement will depend on his schedule, but he intends to remain close to it, and his studio will be responsible for it all.

"It is my intent to remain as personally involved as possible, and if I can, I'll write *and* illustrate the next book," says Grell. "If I have to lay back on anything, I will always continue to write *James Bond*."

Noted for his realistic characters, Grell says he had to take Bond into consideration when he was doing his own *Sable*. "I was dealing with a character who operated on an international basis, and I had to be careful not to copy Bond plots, though due to the nature of the characters, I don't think they were terribly close. Bond has always relied heavily on plot, and Sable always relied on characterization. What I want to do with Bond is provide more emphasis on the characterization, along with the plot—I feel they should be better balanced."

And so, his future with James Bond assured, we close—for now—the file on Mike Grell, leaving him shaken, but not stirred. ■

Ribit

(continued from page 56)

are those where I get the sense of something private being done publicly. Even with *Sonja*, which is where it all started years ago, I found myself involved in a sort of fantasy way which became a 'private affair' between Sonja and me."

This is also offered as a partial explanation for his absence from mainstream comics for the better part of the past decade. While some fans feel that it is his portrayal of scantily or seldom clad women which has kept him off the newsstands, Thorne doesn't believe he has ever been the victim of censorship.

"I've never really felt it. Even when I was doing Chita at Warren, no one ever said anything to me. I can honestly say no one has ever said I couldn't do this or that. *Playboy* certainly never said anything, nor Jim Warren.

"Of course, I've never depicted any characters eating babies or anything like that. So, while I'm a totally amoral person," he says with a smile, "I guess there's some vague definition there between what's gross-out and what's just overt exploitation."

He concedes, however, that distributors' past reluctance to handle the oft-times sexually-oriented *Ghita* was on his mind when he created *Ribit!* "I went so far as to make Rib 'flat chested.'

"If I did battle with true, inner demons instead of the fictional ones which run rampant through *Ribit!*, maybe the thrust of my material would change. As it is, my view of the world is too benign to have to wrestle with such large furniture," he says. "I don't think my work is the place for pondering world politics."

While careful not to criticize his contemporaries, Thorne notes, "It's an entertainment medium, it's theater. I'm poorly qualified to be a critic or aspire to judge someone else's work, but I would certainly celebrate anybody else's use of the comics medium.

"*Ghita* dealt with very lusty, very human frailties and fealties, but in a very buoyant way where it reads on several different levels. *Ribit!* is less dark, less bi-level, because I'm deliberately doing something in a lighter mode.

"I say it's a comic for grown-ups, not 'adults,' that children can also read. Once you say 'adult,' right away people are thinking there's something salacious about it, there's that connotation."

By leaving the women dressed, he explains, "I hope I'm not disappointing anyone. I hope the energy, the characters and the charm of the story will please all." He says it all in an unassuming, self-effacing way that comic fans might not be accustomed to seeing in today's superstars.

"I'm not that much of a robuster," says Frank Thorne. "I'm just a guy hanging on to a whisp of a dream and enjoying it and not complaining at all." ■

John Haymes Newton
Boy of Steel

The adventures of Superboy when he was an actor.

By EDWARD GROSS

I feel that with a 50-year-old dynasty behind me, I have a responsibility when I put on this costume and play this character," explains actor John Haymes Newton, better known as TV's Superboy. "Superman was one of the helpful diversions during the Depression and World War II, and I think that everyone has had their own helpful diversions. There was Elvis in the '50s, and the Beatles during the '60s. Entertainment has always flourished during hard times, and Superman has been one of the things that have helped to carry our country. It's an American icon we're extremely proud of. That's why I would never do anything to damage the character."

Newton's flight as the Kryptonian continues. *Superboy* has been renewed for the remainder of the season. "Generally, I'm pleased with the first 13 shows," he says. "We're still learning some of the special effects, and so far, they haven't been the best. Most of the flying mattes and the blue screen shots are a little frustrating because we know we can do them better. We're getting more money for the next 13 and stronger writers. It's getting there, but like anything, it's a learning process, and the only way to learn is to experience. The ratings keep going up and up. *Superboy*'s as close to being a hit show as it can be."

Even before *Superboy* began production, the cast and crew were faced with two distinct concerns: continuity within the Superman universe, and Newton's approach to the dual roles of Superboy and Clark Kent.

"As you know," says Newton, "Superman has been written for 51 years and there were continuity problems. Many people have come in and straightened it out and said, 'This happened, but that didn't.' We've also done a little bit of that on the show. The *Superboy* comics had Clark being 13 or 14, and we're doing Superboy at 19 and attending Schuster College with Lana Lang and T.J. White. Essentially, we're setting the format for how Superman got to be the way he was. This is before the Fortress of Solitude, so I don't really understand everything, but my powers are surfacing as I need them. It's just like an infant who reacts when he touches something that's hot. If one of my super powers is needed, it surfaces and I learn how to use it to the best of my abilities. I'm also learning how to set up the differences between Clark and Superboy. I'm going away from the bumbling and nerdy side of Clark. He's more of a real guy with real feelings, and he hasn't

All Superboy & Associated Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc. All Superboy Episode Photos: Copyright 1989 Viacom

"We're still learning some of the special FX," notes Newton as he takes flight with Stacy Haiduk.

developed the nerdy facade, which could get very boring on a long-running series. People saw that in four films, and I don't think they want to see it again."

However, that doesn't mean that the behind-the-scenes pressure to follow that version of Clark Kent has lessened.

"DC started getting surveys from kids who were saying that Clark was supposed to be nerdy, because they were so used to the films, and they wanted me to play nerdy. I said, 'Well, then you're going to have to fire me, because I'm *not* going to do what Chris Reeve did in the films.' I just wouldn't do it because that's *not* Superboy, that's Chris Reeve's Superman," Newton elaborates

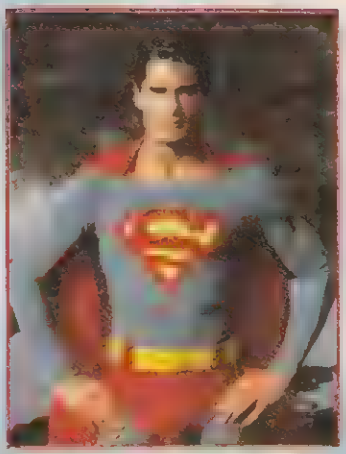
"I wanted Superboy to be a real human being that people could get pulled into watching. I had to find other ways of establishing the two characters as far as my acting when approaching the part.

Clark is definitely more real. He likes to have fun with his friends, he likes to goof around, but he can't really lower his guard all the way and be himself in front of them, or have a normal relationship with girls. It's important for Clark to keep one foot on the ground and one in the air, and this is to keep him separate from a society that would otherwise treat him like a circus freak.

"With Superboy, the comic's writers got ridiculous and it became super power of the week. It got to the point in the films, too, where he was invulnerable to everything. I wanted to make him more vulnerable in many ways and at the same time come up with a balance of powers he can use."

Proof of this comes from watching any number of episodes, where the Boy of Steel struggles to lift heavy objects.

"Fifteen tons is a lot of weight, even if you're 10 times stronger than a human being," Newton notes. "To have someone pretend that they can lift it with their finger is, to me, spitting at the audience, and that bothered me. I went back to the Fleischer cartoons. They're the most incredible cartoons I've ever seen. I noticed that in every single instance, Superman would have to struggle and then he would overcome. But there *was* a struggle there, and it wasn't this attitude of 'Watch this, as I lift up this train with one hand.' It was fascinating to me. It was like a smaller conflict within the bigger conflict, and I felt it was very necessary."



In differentiating between Superboy and Clark Kent, actor John Haymes Newton is avoiding Kent's "bumbling, nerdy side."

Newton also found it necessary to follow acting as a career, beginning at age four when he started re-enacting the Apollo space missions. He landed additional "stage" work in elementary school and high school.

"I was always the class clown," he confesses. "I was always drawn to the idea of making people laugh, and the need to perform, but I didn't really think about it as a career until I was a senior in high school. Neighbors and friends kept telling me that I should move to New York and follow my dreams. I guess I was there about three years before I was signed on to do the series."

Helping Newton to "become" Superboy is his longtime interest in Eastern philosophy, as well as the martial arts. That and the fact that at one time he served as a bodyguard for celebrities.

"It helped a *lot*," Newton enthuses. "I try to implant a great deal of Eastern philosophy into the character and westernize it. Because I can't meditate on the show, I try to bring some of that peace and calm to Superboy, and that awareness of power, without allowing the ego to enter the picture. He doesn't have that sense of power-ego, because he's learning about himself. As far as Chris Reeve was concerned, Superman was the real person and Clark Kent was the acting role. In other words, the actor was playing someone acting a part, so he was always acting. I like to feel that *Clark* is the real character, and Superboy is a *product* of the costume and what happens when someone is aware of his powers, abilities and that sense of knowledge."

While discussing his beliefs, Newton admits that he trusts in a variety of things which middle America doesn't readily accept, and he only reluctantly shares his views on these subjects, to further explain why he feels it's appropriate that he is portraying this visitor from another star.

"I really should sit down and decide what I do and don't want to tell people, because most of the audience is middle-of-the-road America, and I would hate to blow the reality for them by painting a picture of me as someone who believes in all this weird stuff that doesn't coincide with everyone else's point-of-view, so I don't want to get off on that tangent," he says sincerely. "But experiences I've had during meditation have helped me with the show, given me a sense of that character and a sense of coming from another planet or area. There are times when I really do feel out of place here, though not in a bad way. Just slightly. . .apart."

Signed to a four-year contract, Newton reveals that after the resulting 104 episodes, he'll be hanging up his cape forever.

"One hundred and four episodes will definitely be enough," he muses, "and that's where I'll draw the line, because I'll be moving on no matter how much money they offer me. Then again, I can't say what the future holds, but now I don't intend on staying beyond that."

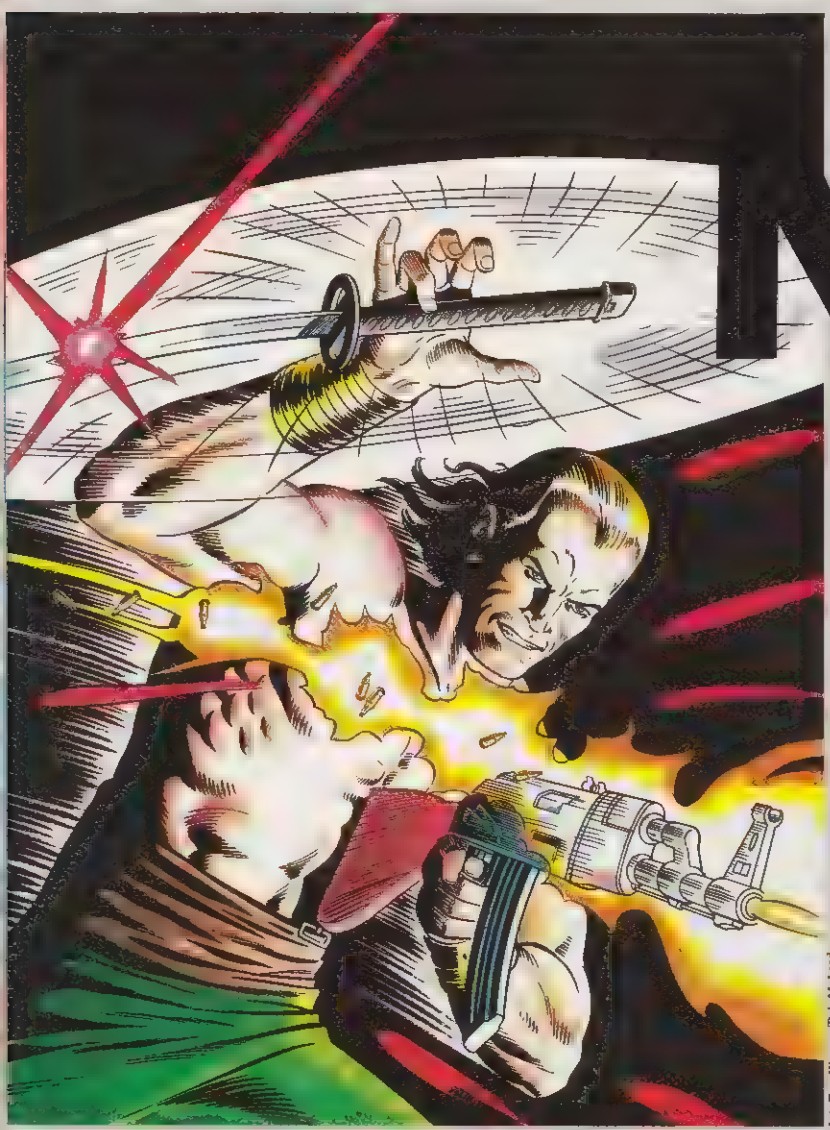
Considering the future of *Superboy*, the actor provides some tantalizing hints to what viewers will see during the balance of the first season.

"We're going to be doing a *lot* of science fiction," Newton promises,

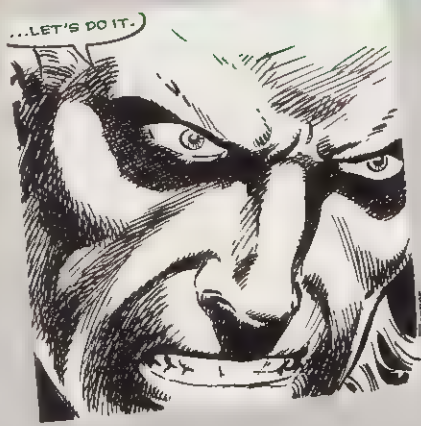
(continued on page 66)

To the NTH Degree

The ultimate ninja and a super psychic are making the world unsafe for democracy—and most everything else.



Art: Ron Wagner/Bob McLeod



Art: Ron Wagner

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

This is really my little treatise on what a superhero is—the ethical dynamics of what we tend to blot out when we perceive a superhero," says Larry Hama, writer of *Nth Man*, a new series coming in April from Marvel Comics. The first issue will be preceded one week earlier by a preview in *Marvel Comics Presents* #25.

Asked to pin down the genre in which his new creation fits, Hama is hard-pressed to come up with an answer. "It's hard for me to even explain the premise, let alone categorize the genre," he says.

"I want to deal with that scary, blurry line between our conception of a superhero and the Nietzschean *Ubermensch*," says writer Larry Hama.

"There's a supertelekinetic in this universe, who can alter time and space, and who has taken it upon himself to make the world better for everyone. He gets rid of all the nuclear weapons. I *know* this has been done," Hama begins, laughing.

"So, one morning, everybody wakes up and there are no more nukes. And every nation starts sending its tanks over the borders," he continues. "Paris is burning, the Warsaw Pact has gone all the way through France; Britain is still holding out; and the Scandinavians are in the forests fighting as partisans. America backs China, which is pushing at Russia from the other side. Soviet airborne troops are in Alaska and Canada, and who knows what's happening in Central America."

This telekinetic, the series' antagonist, is considered so dangerous that the United States intelligence community decides he must be eliminated. "The only person they think can stop him is an assassin—the Nth Man—who grew up with him in an orphanage in Iowa," Hama explains.

"The problem is that the assassin is incarcerated in the basement of Lubyanka Prison in Moscow. He had been sent there, before the war, to take out the head of the KGB's assassination division."

Art: Ron Wagner

Unlike his G.I. *Joe* series, Hama won't have to worry about getting rid of the nonessentials in *Nth Man*.

But a hitch develops in the plan, according to Hama: The assassin doesn't want to kill anymore. "In the year he has been imprisoned, he has come to the conclusion that assassination is not a valid extension of national policy." Despite that, a team of U.S. commandos breaks into Lubyanka and frees the Nth Man, getting him out of the Soviet Union and back to where he can deal with the telekinetic.

As you might be able to tell from phrases like "valid extension of national policy," Hama's thoughts behind *Nth Man* are not the usual superhero slamfest or the standard war comic morality story.

"I want to deal with that scary, blurry line between our conception of a superhero and the Nietzschean *Ubermensch*, who, in this case, is the telekinetic. Nth Man is a somewhat Ayn Rand-ian pragmatic, realist hero, and the telekinetic is Nietzsche's *Ubermensch*," Hama says. "The question I want to raise is: If a man really has these powers, and if he's an altruist, why doesn't he use them to solve all the world's problems? And if he's *not* an altruist, why not use them for something more powerful than mere financial gain?

"In the standard superhero genre, we *never* approach those questions. We're almost afraid to. That means, when reading superhero comics, we're forced into a whole plethora of suspensions of disbelief—not just that a man can fly or crash through walls, but that he would never contemplate doing all the things you would expect such a powerful man to do. It's not just the physical world we have to disbelieve, it's the psychological as well."

"Exactly!" chimes in Hama's creative partner, artist Ron Wagner. "I agree with *everything* Larry said," he goes on, laughing.

Wagner knows that the concepts Hama has put forth as the basis for *Nth Man* create some artistic challenges for him. "Larry's trying to avoid stereotypes. Nobody really knows who the good guys are and who the bad guys are," Wagner explains. "A character can be good in one story and bad in the next. Larry wants to keep everyone off balance. I'm just trying to make these characters real because I can't rely on artistic stereotypes either. *Nth Man* is not a superhero book; it is a war book but it isn't. People ask me what it's about and I don't know what to say. Unless you see the stuff Larry has written, you don't understand."

"I'm very put off when equipment in a comic doesn't look right," notes artist Ron Wagner, who'll be seeing to it that Nth Man & Co. are properly armed.

No matter where Larry Hama's fantasies lie, he seems to have created a series that is right up Ron Wagner's artistic alley.

"I was a Russ Heath nut when I was a kid," Wagner notes. "*Sgt. Rock* was my thing. Artistically, my influences are people like Heath, Gray Morrow—who's a good friend—and Alex Toth. I especially like the way Toth handles people. They're very natural-looking, not drawn in extremes the way most comics artists do."

To an artist like Wagner, who's a stickler for accuracy, a series like *Nth Man* could be a cause for worry. It requires constant reference on state-of-the-art military equipment from around the world, but Wagner says he has found an excellent source.

"There's a military bookstore in New York that handles information on this sort of stuff, including the latest Soviet and Chinese equipment. It panders to us fascist military types who have to know about this stuff," he chuckles. "Larry also has a great deal of research material and I have a more-than-passing interest in it, so the reference is available."

The realism that reference material gives *Nth Man* is important to Wagner. "A military buff who reads this book is going to say, 'Yeah, this is what this all

(continued on page 66)

Art: Ron Wagner/Bob McLeod

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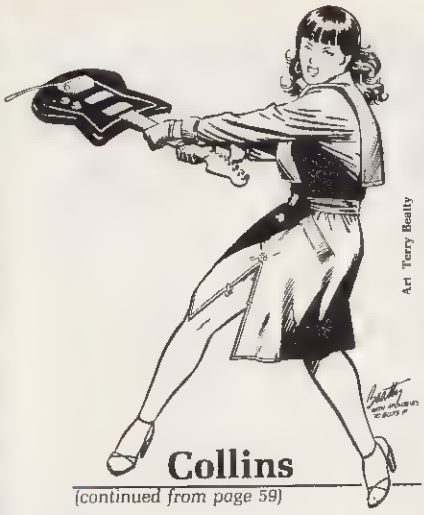


Collins

(continued from page 59)

quite minimal, the on-again/off-again *Dick Tracy* movie, directed by and starring Warren Beatty, appears to be moving forward. "I think it's actually going to happen this time," Collins says. "I've been hearing about this since 1977, but this seems to be legit and for real. There's a possibility of me consulting, but I want to write the novelization. I've never sought a novelization before in my life, but I *want* this one. I want to have some connection, however tenuous, to that project."

In the meantime, fans of his fiction can expect Collins' third Eliot Ness novel, *Bullet Proof*, to be out in April. "The title is a pun referring to the ballistics evidence. It's about crooked labor racketeering, and is very much a true story. I'm projecting the Ness books as a six-book series about Ness in Cleveland. If they continue to be successful, there will be a second sextet that will deal with the rest of his life."

The previous Ness book, *Butcher's Dozen*, dealt with Cleveland's Torso Slayings, which police still consider to be unsolved. In an effort remniscent of modern attempts to solve the Jack the Ripper killings, Collins says his research indicated that Ness actually solved the case, but never publicly revealed his findings. Collins will also be writing two new Nate Heller books for Bantam. The next in the Heller series—which also combines historical fact and fiction—will deal with the Lindbergh baby kidnapping. The most recent Heller mystery, *Neon Mirage*, will be out in paperback later this year.

Despite his other work, Max Allan Collins will remain true to *Ms. Tree* and its promising new format. "Terry and I feel a challenge. We feel like this is our last chance to make *Ms. Tree* more than a cult success. We're looking for at least a two-year run. It will either make the character much more successful and accessible to a wider public, or we'll go out with a bang, and do our best two years. If we do another two years, that will be 10 years of *Ms. Tree*. And that's pretty impressive!"

Newton

(continued from page 63)

"which will be interesting. There have been some boring scripts compared to what we could do—for instance, there's one episode ["The Fixer"] about fixing the points of a basketball game—but it's a balance."

He points to the 13th episode, "The Alien Factor," scripted by DC writer/editors Mike Carlin and Andy Helfer, as proof of changes in the air.

"An alien comes down to Earth in the form of a gas, and he has a trophy collection in his ship of all the great warriors throughout history. Now, he wants to add Superboy to that collection, so he takes the form of a samurai warrior and I have to fight it out with him. It's a very exciting episode, although I was slightly disappointed because I wanted to utilize my martial arts skills against him but DC wanted it to be more of a John Wayne-fisticuffs style of fighting. I tried to phrase it any way I could, but they were pretty adamant on what they wanted. I can't really blame them, but I hope we'll get it in a future episode. I guess they have their reasons. I think DC got a little paranoid after the *Superman* movies became a situation where they didn't have enough control, which I agree with. The first and second films were solid, but then they started getting weird, and I think DC has a fear of that. They're trying to protect their characters.

"The strengths of the first 13 episodes were the guest stars, the villainy and the acting," he reflects. "I don't think the actors were playing it too campy. They're playing it very real. The weaknesses were that the special FX can be improved upon, which is happening, and some of the scripts could have been better. We're getting in new writers and directors with fresher ideas, so that should be nice, too. There are many things I would like to put into the show which we don't have time to do in 22 minutes, although we're learning how to do it without making it look like we're just throwing in all of these elements. Sometimes, when your best friends are kidnapped and they're dying, and it's up to you to save their lives, you don't have time for humor or to develop another character line.

"As I said, the second [group of 13 episodes] is definitely going in more of a science-fiction direction, although the scripts haven't solidified yet. We're also hoping to get more into the character's lore, and there has been talk of using Red Kryptonite, which could be really interesting. The only problem with that is that the average viewer doesn't know that there are many forms of Kryptonite, so they might not believe it. In any case, we'll have to wait and see what happens. Talk is cheap, but I do know that these are going to be more powerful and stronger 13 episodes of *Superboy*." ■

Nth Man

(continued from page 65)

looks like!' " Wagner notes. "I'm very put off when equipment in a comic doesn't look right. I lose interest very quickly, *especially* when it's obvious stuff like a phone, for instance.

"Most guys drawing a comic have a phone sitting right next to them, but do they look at it? No! So, what they draw looks wrong and that ruins my suspension of disbelief. Look at somebody like Neal Adams—and I'm *not* comparing myself to Neal—everything looks real. That helps with the story and that's what I'm trying to do with *Nth Man*."

Quizzed about his relatively short career in comics, Wagner can't resist a joke. "I got into comics because I needed a career," he laughs. "I needed to get out of Iowa. I came to New Jersey and went to art school there. I had to do something—and working in a factory in Iowa wasn't it."

Some of Wagner's earliest professional work was on DC's *Hex* series, which also involved futuristic warfare. That was followed, after a switch to Marvel, by a stint doing short stories for the war anthology series, *Savage Tales*, edited by Hama. Then came *G.I. Joe*.

"*G.I. Joe* isn't real war," Wagner points out, "although nobody's drawing that, either. *G.I. Joe* is for kids, but Larry's real proud of it. It's hard to do. There are 50 million characters, and every six months, there are 25 new ones. It's hard to really develop a character.

"And there are twice as many guns and vehicles as characters. Hasbro wants to see all of them in the comic. 'Where's our new vehicle? You *must* promote the current toys!' "

Speaking of promotion, it would seem that *Nth Man* would be a tough sell, both for Marvel to the public and Hama to Marvel. The company isn't known for non-costumed characters, yet Nth Man is just that; the company isn't known for series set outside its established "universe," yet *Nth Man* is just that; and finally, the company isn't known for series with a heavy philosophical bent, yet according to Hama, *Nth Man* is just that. How did he convince Marvel that this was a series that could be successful?

Surprisingly, he says the sell wasn't as hard as one might think.

"Everything I've ever done for Marvel has been outside its mainstream universe. I started out as the editor of *Crazy*, then went on to edit the Conan titles, and *G.I. Joe, Semper Fi', The 'Nam*, things like that. The powers that be at Marvel know that anything I come up with is going to be outside their usual stuff. So, it wasn't a hard sell in that sense.

"Hell," he laughs, "editing *Peter Porker, the Spectacular Spider-Ham* was probably the closest I ever came to a standard Marvel superhero!" ■

COMICS REPORTER

Judge Dredd, The Readers' Verdict

Last issue, producer Charles Lippincott challenged COMICS SCENE readers to help him cast the movie version of *Judge Dredd* he's developing. "I'm happy to hear what the readers think," he explained, "who they believe should play Judge Dredd and Judge Anderson [his female colleague]."

And so the mail began. A sampling of reader suggestions for Dredd and Anderson follow

Rutger (*Blade Runner*) Hauer or Richard Kiel ("Jaws" of *Moonraker*). Sandahl (*Conan*) Bergman or Stephanie Kramer (of TV's *Hunter*)—Rick Hodge, Gastonia, NC

Richard (*Night Court*) Moll. Helen (*Supergirl*) Slater. –Steve & Brenda Erwin, Hurst, TX

Rowdy Roddy (*They Live*) Piper. Patrick Lozito, Brooklyn, NY

Duncan ("V") Regehr, Steven (*Above the Law*) Segal, Mark (*ALIENS*) Rolston, Everett (*Quest for Fire*) McGill. "To be honest, that was sort of my list of candidates for *Batman*. However, the qualities I sought in a Darknight Detective transfer well to the Mega City top cop," explains Brian McLean, Austin, TX

And McLean's candidates for Anderson: Theresa (*Black Widow*) Russell, Kim (*Never Say Never Again*) Basinger, Linda (*Beauty & the Beast*) Hamilton, Lori (*Footloose*) Singer.

Jim McMahon (of the Chicago Bears football team), Ken (*Wiseguy*) Wahl, Michael (*Streets of Fire*) Pare, James (*48 HRS*) Remar. Anderson? Mary Ann Pascal (of Showtime's *Brothers* sitcom), Joan (*Wiseguy*) Severance, Linnea (*Return of the Living Dead*) Quigley, Jamie Lee Curtis (of *A Fish Called Wanda*), Melanie (*Working Girl*) Griffith, Meg (*Innerspace*) Ryan, Cory Everson (of ESPN's *Bodyshaping*), *Elfquest*'s Wendi Pini, Sandahl Bergman, Brigitte (*Red Sonja*) Nielsen. —Jack L. Snowden, Houston, TX.

Brian Thompson (the bad guy from *Cobra*). Sybil (*Howling II*) Danning —Dan Cameron, Crystal Springs, MS

Arnold Schwarzenegger ("Can't you hear him say 'I am the Law' or 'You're next . . . punk' "). Sandahl Bergman, Brigitte Nielsen, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Denise Crosby.—Name withheld, Royal Oak, MI.

Peter (*RoboCop*) Weller. "And why not *RoboCop*'s Nancy Allen for Judge Anderson?" asks Mike Munson, Florida.

Stephen (*Tales of the Gold Monkey*) Collins. *Buckaroo Banzai*'s Ellen Barkin —Name withheld, Monsey, NY.

Schwarzenegger. And Erin Gray (of TV's *Buck Rogers*) Jeff Skipski, Nacogdoches, TX.

"Not Schwarzenegger," pleads Wade Martineau, Whitecourt, AB, Canada. "Tim Capello. Who? Tina Turner's saxophone player. Here's why not only does he have the physique and a grim enough visage, he's fluent in speech and confident. Yes, I'm serious. And how about Rosanna [*Silverado*] Arquette for Anderson?"

Richard Kiel. Bonnie Franklin "Or if you wanted a younger, sexier actress with experience in action/adventure films, Linda Blair," suggests Randy Crawford, Grand Rapids, MI

Steve Bisley, 5'9", Australian, Max's best friend in *Mad Max* Or Mark Rolston, "6'1" or 6'2", American based in the United Kingdom." Or Canadian Duncan Regehr. And as Anderson? *Max Headroom*'s Amanda Pays. —J.L. Montague, Austin, TX.

'Peter Weller would have been my first choice," advises Ed Baker, Flemington, NJ. "Unfortunately, *RoboCop* is too similar to *Judge Dredd* to consider Weller. A second choice would be *ALIENS*' Michael Biehn. Dredd is often drawn with a superhero's body, the only type of people who have that kind of body are Dolph Lundgren or Schwarzenegger, neither of whom would fit Dredd."

Baker's trio of possible Judge Andersons include *Action Jackson*'s Sharon Stone ("perfect for this part"), *Mannequin*'s Kim Cattrall ("the best actress of the three, but physically the least like Anderson") and *T.J. Hooker*'s Heather Locklear ("maybe too pretty to be Anderson, but she can handle the role") "Too bad Diana Rigg, Emma Peel of *The Avengers*, isn't 28 anymore," Baker laments.

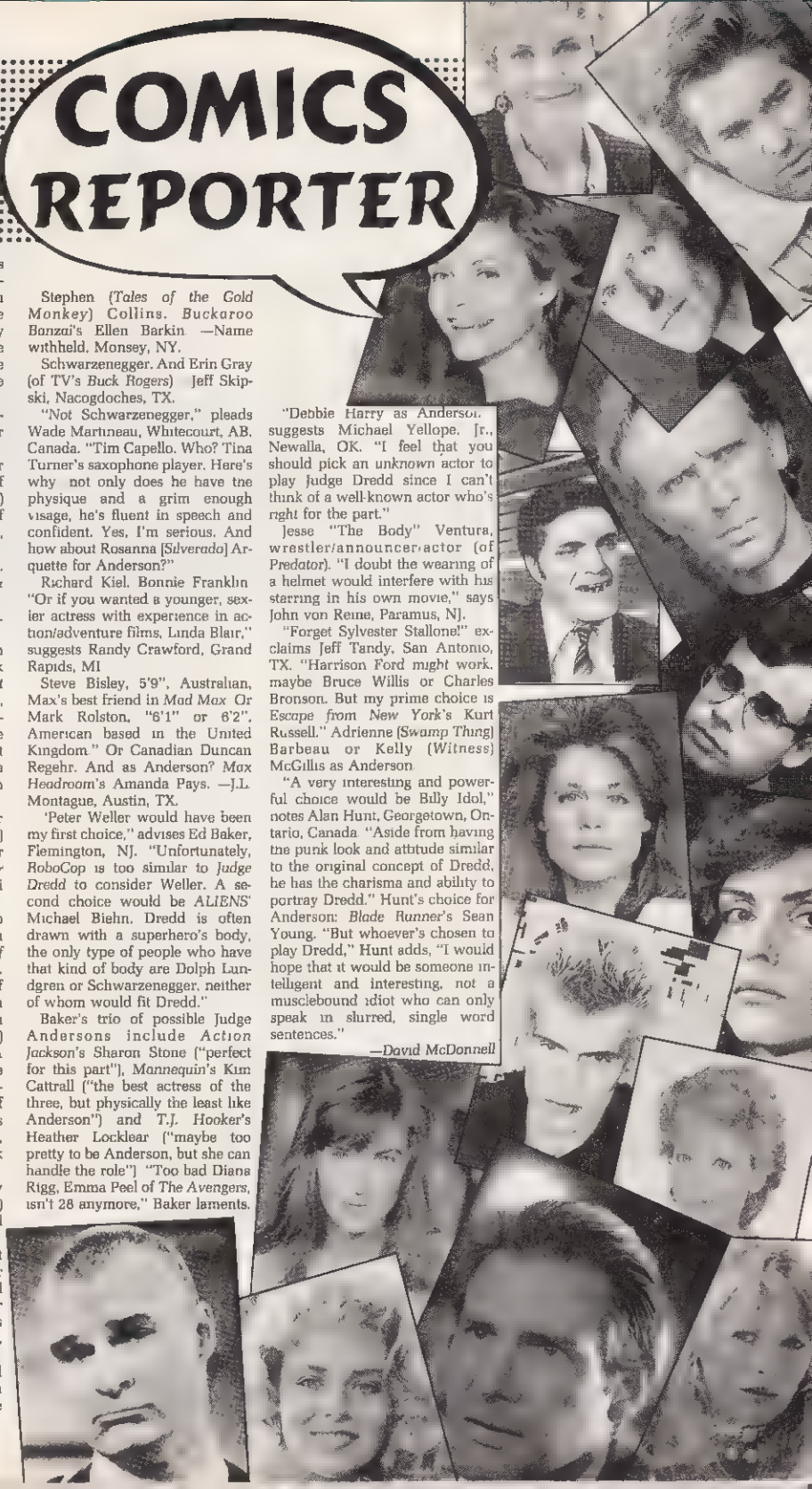
"Debbie Harry as Anderson," suggests Michael Yellope, Jr., Newalla, OK. "I feel that you should pick an *unknown* actor to play Judge Dredd since I can't think of a well-known actor who's *right* for the part."

Jesse "The Body" Ventura, wrestler/announcer/actor (of *Predator*). "I doubt the wearing of a helmet would interfere with his starring in his own movie," says John von Reine, Paramus, NJ.

"Forget Sylvester Stallone!" exclaims Jeff Tandy, San Antonio, TX. "Harrison Ford *might* work, maybe Bruce Willis or Charles Bronson. But my prime choice is *Escape from New York*'s Kurt Russell." Adrienne (*Swamp Thing*) Barbeau or Kelly (*Witness*) McGillis as Anderson

"A very interesting and powerful choice would be Billy Idol," notes Alan Hunt, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada "Aside from having the punk look and attitude similar to the original concept of Dredd, he has the charisma and ability to portray Dredd." Hunt's choice for Anderson: *Blade Runner*'s Sean Young. "But whoever's chosen to play Dredd," Hunt adds, "I would hope that it would be someone intelligent and interesting, not a musclebound idiot who can only speak in slurred, single word sentences."

—David McDonnell



Photos: Mall Warner Bros. Stone 1985 Cannon, Pays & Weller 1989 MGM/A Ford 1987 Warner Bros Basinger 1983 Taltalfilm, Allen Courtesy Orion, Idol Courtesy Hard Rock, Harry, 1983 Universal, Hamilton
Wolf Thomas Productions, Moranis 1984 Universal, Kael 1979 Daniel S A. Pfeiffer 1984 Warner Bros & 20th Century Fox, Hauer 1986 New World, Russell 1986 20th Century Fox, Ryan 1987 Warner Bros.

The Comics Screen

These comic book/strip/pulp/radio/cartoon characters are bound for another medium: movie, TV, animation, Broadway. This list is by no means complete and will be continuously revised. *All* projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk have had a change in status since previous listing. **Attn: comics & media pros:** Clarifications and other info to be added to this list are cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016.

* **The Addams Family**. TV pilot. Seems "dead."

The Adjuster. Comic character in development from Marvel & Columbia Pictures TV.

* **The Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters**. Animated series. Rankin-Bass, producers.

The Airtight Garage. Moebius' SF graphic novel. Animated full-length feature. Co-production between Montreal-based animation firm Productions Pascal Blais & Starwatcher Graphics.

The American. Dark Horse Comics hero. Film or TV series.

American Flagg! Movie

Andy Capp. Separate British & American TV pilots in works.

* **Annie**. Separate movie & Broadway musical sequels in development. Movie possibly to film this spring. Lewis Gilbert, director.

Antman. New World developed script. "Dead."

* **Archie**. Movie. Warner Bros. Joel Schumacher, director. Archie: Corey Haim. Also separate TV movie in works for NBC fall 1989 airing. Executive producers: Tom Patchett, Andy Heyward. Animated *Archies 3000* series mulled

* **The Avengers.** Not the comics' heroes but John Steed. Mel Gibson to star. Script: Sam Hamm.

Babar. *Babar: The Movie*, animated spring 1989 premiere.

* **Batman**. Movie from Warner Bros. Script: Sam Hamm. Tim Burton, director. Batman: Michael Keaton. Joker: Jack Nicholson. In post-production. Summer 1989 premiere. (see articles)

* **Beany & Cecil**. ABC Saturday a.m. animated series. Cancelled.

* **Beetle Bailey.** Movie. Animated TV special in development. Script: Hank Saroyan.

* **James Bond**. New Timothy Dalton 007 film, *License to Kill*, opens this summer.

Betty Boop. Movie. Pierre Spengler, producer. Richard Fleischer (whose father & uncle, Dave & Max Fleischer, created the character) may direct.

Blackhawk. Film.

Blade. Movie based on *Tomb of Dracula* character at New World. Script by Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin. Tom De Simone, director. Considered "dead."

Blondie. Further half-hour CBS animated special planned.

Brenda Starr, Reporter. Movie starring Brooke Shields & Timothy Dalton. Release delayed by legal tangles.

Bugs Bunny. *Bugs Bunny & Tweety*, hour animated series, on ABC Saturdays.

* **Bullwinkle**. Natasha & Boris Badenov resurface in a live-action comedy *Our Boy Badenov* with Sally Kellerman & Dave Thomas. Script by Charles Fradin. Charles Martin-Smith, director. Due out this year.

Captain America. Cannon Film dead (?). Broadway musical in development.

Cathy. Further animated TV specials to appear on CBS

* **The Chameleon**. New comics character created by Stan Lee for TV. Bitten by a chameleon as a boy, hero can transform himself to look like anyone

* **Chip & Dale**. Star in new animated syndicated series for Disney, *Rescue Rangers*. Debuts fall 1989.

Conan. Sequel in limbo.

Copperhead: The Legend of Mongrel. Joint Marvel & Laurel Entertainment project developed by Jim Shooter & George Romero. "Dead," though Romero would still "like" to do it.

Cracked. Superhero parody movie in development.

Crossfire. TV pilot. ABC.

* **Daffy Duck**. "The Duxorcist" & "Night of the Living Duck," new shorts, in release. Also part of compilation *Quackbusters*.

* **Daredevil**. Character to be introduced in *Hulk* TV movie. (see item)

* **Deathlok**. Movie at New World

Delta Tenn. TV series in development by Shannon Tweed to star herself.

DNAgents. Movie. UA.

* **Dick Tracy**. Movie. For Touchstone. Warren Beatty, director and star. Announced to start filming early 1989. Madonna may co-star.

Doc Savage. Movie.

* **Dr. Mortalis**. New Jack Kirby comics character created for Empire Entertainment movie. "Dead."

Dr. Strange. Movie. Script: Bob Gale. "Dead" at New World. May resurface elsewhere

Donald Duck. Donald cameos in *Duck Tales*.

* **Elektra**. Movie scripted by L.M. Kit Carson & Jim McBride. McBride may direct. Presumed "dead" at New World.

Elfquest. Movie in limbo.

* **The Executioner**. Movie. Sylvester Stallone stars. Filming delayed. May abort.

* **Fantastic Four**. Movie in development with Neue Constantin. Progress expected on this project by 1990. Bernard Eichinger, producer.

The Far Side. Movie of Gary Alan Rudolph, director. Alive Films production.

Felix the Cat. Animated feature, mostly done in Hungary, for New World.

* **The Flash**. Movie. First draft script by Jim Strain, from a story by Todd Holland. "Dead."

The Flintstones. Movie scripted by Steven de Souza. To star Jim Belushi & Rick Moranis. Joel Silver, producer. For Tri-Star release from Taft Entertainment/Keith Barish Productions. Delayed due to economics & restructuring at Taft.

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series, *Garfield & Friends*, on CBS (includes adaptations of Jim Davis' *U.S. Acres*). Movie, *Garfield's Judgment Day*, also planned.

The Greatest American Hero. Animated version developed at Stephen Cannell Entertainment.

The Green Hornet. Movie. For Taft Entertainment/Keith Barish Productions.

* **Green Lantern**. Movie. Joel Silver, producer

Hagar the Horrible. Animated CBS special.

Heavy Metal. *Heavy Metal's Burning Chrome*, animated movie based on William Gibson story.

He-Man. Animated syndicated series continues.

* **The Incredible Hulk**. Several NBC TV movies planned. Each is designed to introduce another superhero to TV (see item).

* **Iron Man**. Movie. Script: John Lau. "Dead." Character to be introduced in Hulk TV movie.

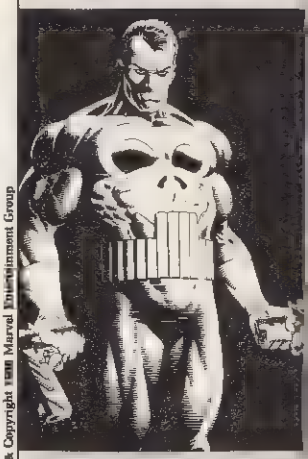
***The Jetsons.** Now an animated film, *not* live-action. Hanna-Barbera, for Universal release this year.

* **Indiana Jones**. Sequel due this summer. New comics series to accompany film.

Jonny Quest. Syndicated animated series. Live-action movie to be written & directed by Fred Dekker. For Taft Entertainment/Keith Barish Productions.

Judge Dredd. Movie. Script: Tim Hunter & James Crumley. Hunter will direct.

* **Kaptain Keen & Ko**. Planned as a syndicated, daily animated series from Rankin-Bass.



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Portrait of a Punisher

Meet the Punisher in black & white and color—Dolph Lundgren (right) as the comics hero come to life on film.

Bill Bixby, Friend to Hulk

Bill Bixby, the actor/director noted for *The Incredible Hulk* and *My Favorite Martian*, was in Vancouver, last November to direct two episodes of George Segal's new ABC TV series, *Murphy's Law* (airing Saturdays, 10 p.m.). But what's next for Bixby? He'll be doing two or three *Incredible Hulk* NBC TV movies in 1989. Each film will introduce a new Marvel Comics character to TV, while serving as series pilots for those very same heroes. It's a tradition which began with *The Incredible Hulk Returns*, broadcast in May 1988 (CS #3) and featuring Thor. Daredevil is next in line.

"The script I'm reading," says Bixby, "is the best *Hulk* I've ever read. I'm producing, directing and acting in this one," which may begin shooting as early as this spring. Bixby says the Hulk won't be meeting up with Dr. Strange, Spider-Man or Captain America, since those heroes already did their TV duty. It's Bixby's goal to do *new* character adaptations. So, the Hulk's TV movie future may include one savage She-Hulk and an invincible Iron Man.

"When I finish directing *Murphy's Law* here, I go back to Los Angeles to finish some scenes of a pilot I directed, then I take two months to just prepare the next *Hulk*," explains Bill Bixby. "It'll take me five to six weeks to shoot it. I'll try and get it edited and together and turned in to the network in three weeks if I can. Then, I'll start up another *Hulk*. I intend, if it's possible, to bring the movie up to Vancouver to shoot. So, when I finish those projects, we'll probably start writing the third *Hulk* movie."

—*Frank Garcia*

Lundgren Punisher Photo: Copyright 1989 New World Pictures

Rabbit Redux

Roger Rabbit will return in an all-new cartoon short in June. It's "Tummy Trouble," directed by Rob Minkoff. And it'll be released along with *Hey, Honey! I've Shrunk the Kids*.

Roger Rabbit Photo: Copyright 1989 Touchstone Pictures & Amblin Entertainment

* **The Lone Ranger**. TV revival projected.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Movie. Edward Pressman, producer.

* **Luke Cage & Iron Fist**. Movie. New World Pictures. Script: Michael Janover.

MAD Magazine. CBS-TV special from Hanna-Barbera airs this season, with animated versions of features like "Spy vs. Spy." Series pilot.

***Mai, the Psychic Girl**. Movie. Optioned by writer/producer Larry Wilson. Co-producer: Walter Hill. With Carolco.

Marvin. Half-hour animated CBS TV special.

* **Mickey Mouse**. New animated shorts planned. Among them: Mickey as Christopher Columbus.

Mighty Mouse. CBS Saturday animated series, *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*, continues. Ralph Bakshi, producer. Animated movie mulled.

* **Mindmaster**. New Jack Kirby comics character created for Empire movie. "Dead."

* **Mr. Jigsaw**. Ron Fortier-Gary Gross character optioned for animation by Rankin-Bass.

Mr. Magoo. Movie. Steven Tisch, producer.

* **Motley's Crew**. Sitcom TV pilot in development. "Dead."

* **My Secret Identity**. Syndicated sitcom features teenager who

* **Nancy**. *Nancy the Movie*. Character is to be seen in her 30s, reunited with Sluggo. Peter Muller, producer.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project.

* **Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD**. Movie. Debra Hill & Lynn Obst, producers. Stephen Herek, director. Script: Greg Pruss

Joe Palooka. Broadway musical in development.

Bat Scribes

Over the decades, his comic book adventures have been shaped by many different writers. Batman's movie exploits are no different. Although Sam Hamm (CS #3) penned the original screenplay for director Tim Burton, two others writers have followed him on the project: Charles McKeown and Warren Skaaren.

However, it won't be clear for several months just how the final script credits will read—or to what extent alterations made by McKeown or Skaaren will remain in the finished film. Such work isn't unusual for Skaaren, a veteran script rewrite man who also redrafted director Burton's *Beetlejuice* and *Top Gun*. It's another matter entirely for writer/actor Charles McKeown—who co-scripted *Brazil* and *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (which he discusses in STARLOG #140), both with director Terry (*Monty Python*) Gilliam.

Burton phoned the Python office and asked them to recommend someone who could "write in a Python style."

"I don't know that I write 'in the Python style,' but they recommended me!" McKeown laughs. "They were in pre-production and going ahead with the film at the time, and so it was nice to sit and chat with Tim Burton about it. Tim thinks I made it funnier and darker, which I think is true. I enabled him to see it in a slightly different way. I opened up certain aspects of it to him which he hadn't thought of.

"I was really just doing some very minor fiddling with a very good script. I don't know how much of what I did survives, but I look forward to seeing it!"

Fans who are worried about the casting of Michael Keaton in the title role, and heard that some in the media had earlier considered the project a comedy, have little to fear, according to McKeown. Although there may be a few funny moments, he says the story is being played straight.

"I never saw the TV show, which is probably a good thing, but it's certainly not going to be camp. It's going to be straight," he stresses. "I was familiar with the comic books, but I went by the script, which I thought was very strong. I knew the Batman character from the comics, not from television. Somebody showed me *The Killing Joke* subsequently, after I had finished; it's good, beautifully drawn stuff."

Terry Gilliam's *Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, co-scripted by Charles McKeown and Gilliam, offers a fantastic foursome of heroes: the visionary Adolphus (McKeown), quicksilver-like Berthold (Eric Idle), superstrong Albrecht (Winston Dennis) and ultra-sensitive Gustavus (Jack Purvis).

McKeown is reluctant to cite specific contributions to the script, simply because his changes may not be included in the final version. "There is this quasi-theological aspect of the Joker creating the Batman, and Batman creating the Joker—a nice symmetry," he remarks. "Batman, having created the Joker—for which he then feels tremendous remorse—therefore feels he must deal with the Joker. It's an interesting idea to have one create the other, an interdependence of forces for good and evil; they're *both* motivated by revenge."

—Kim Howard Johnson

Munchausen Photo: S. Strizzi/Copyright 1988 Columbia Pictures Industries

Marsh Fellow

It's hard to miss actor/stuntman Dick Durock as he clumps around the outdoor set of *The Return of Swamp Thing*. He's taller, more muscular and definitely greener than just about anyone in the cast and crew of the Lightyear Entertainment sequel, which co-stars Louis (*Octopussy*) Jourdan as the evil Dr. Arcane and Heather (*Dynasty*) Locklear as Arcane's stepdaughter Abby. Most amazing of all, Durock looks *nothing* like the Swamp Thing of the 1982 Avco-Embassy video cult classic—even though he was the man in that suit, too!

"After *Swamp Thing*," Durock says frankly, "I said *never* again! Rubber suits aren't meant to work in 12 hours a day, six days a week. Traditionally, it's OK, bring the creature in, work for an hour, and forget it. Like Lou Ferrigno in *The Hulk*, who had to wear the white-out lenses. My God, I had to wear 'em once and that was enough for me!"

Dick Durock sees a number of similarities between the David Banner/Hulk duality and the plight of his character in *The Return of Swamp Thing*. But there are differences too. Big ones. Swamp Thing is stuck as Swamp Thing. He can't go back to being scientist Alec Holland. And unlike the TV Hulk, he's rational and articulate.

"Generally, when you have a creature," Durock reflects, "the creature doesn't do anything other than just lurk around. I think it was unique in the first *Swamp Thing* movie that he had emotions. He spoke. He laughed. He cried. He fell in love. It was like treading new ground—at least for me.

Swamp Thing Character: Trademark & Copyright DC Comics Inc.

Swamp Thing Photos: R. Jeffcoat/Copyright 1989 Lightyear Entertainment

The Swamp Thing has a new look in the sequel, but Dick Durock is still the face beneath the muck.

"Part of my job is to keep Swamp Thing in character," Durock adds. "He doesn't do anything violent intentionally—only with a damn good purpose. He's a nice guy. He really doesn't want to hurt anybody, but he's gotta get in that house and save Abby."

Fans of the DC Comics muck monster will be pleased by the new-look Swamp Thing in this film. After the rubbery, exposed-zipper creature suit of the first film, the new "Swampy" looks great. Durock credits the improved suit with convincing him to reprise what is probably his most famous film role. The design, by FX makeup artist Carl (*Warlock*) Fullerton, derives its inspiration from the Steve Bissette/John Totleben version of the character rather than the original Berni Wrightson concept, and it's a stunning piece of mobile sculpture. Special pains were taken to match the coloration of the new suit with the indigenous Georgia foliage. The end result is a remarkable visual effect: Swamp Thing is naturally camouflaged. Several action scenes, where unsuspecting bad guys unwittingly walk past as Swamp Thing blends into bushes, make striking use of this property. And it's not an optically enhanced trick. It actually works in real life!

Ultimately, the success of *The Return of Swamp Thing* won't rely on tricks and painted rubber, but on Dick Durock's ability to make the man buried under the roots and mire come to life on the screen. He pulled it off in the first film, and he's determined to do it again, even though the new Swamp Thing will be portrayed as more of a leafy action hero than a pitiable man-turned-monster.

"I think Swamp Thing has more fun in this one," Durock observes. "It's a little lighter. He's metamorphized into something else. Physically, there's an obvious difference in the suit. But he's cuter this time and less sad about his state. He still is, but not as much as last time. That was just [*Swamp Thing* director] Wes Craven's interpretation.

"I wear the green suit," Dick Durock concludes, "but I don't think any differently than if I were doing it *without* the green suit. That's Swamp Thing's essence. Even though he lives by photosynthesis, the guy's human. I think that's the appeal of Swamp Thing."

—*Will Murray*

* **Peanuts**. Four half-hour historical animated TV specials air this spring.

The Phantom. Movie. Bruce Sherlock, Peter Sjoquist, John Torv, Rodney Price, producers. Script: Ken Shadie. *Phantom* creator Lee Falk is consulting.

Plastic Man. Movie. Joe Dante may direct. Separate scripts by Charles Gale & Joe Lafia. In development at Guber-Peters.

The Protector. Comics character developed by Marvel & Warner Bros.

* **The Punisher**. Movie. Dolph Lundgren stars. Lou Gossett & Jeroen Krabbe co-star. Mark Goldblatt, director. Sequels planned. Summer 1989 release.

* **Radio Boy**. Animated project featuring Japanese robot. Rankin-Bass.

* **Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman**. Movie. May star Jim Belushi. Script by creator David Boswell. Matt Weisman, Joseph Loeb II, producers.

* **RoboCop**. Sequel. Being scripted by comics' Frank Miller.

Animated version part of *Marvel Universe*.

The Rocketeer. Movie in development at Disney. Bill Dear, director. Script: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo.

* **Roger Rabbit**. Stars in a new animated short "Tummy Trouble" for June release. Rob Minkoff, director.

* **Sally Forth**. Universal sitcom in development.

* **Sgt. Preston of the Yukon**. TV revival projected.

* **Sgt. Rock**. Movie. May star Arnold Schwarzenegger. John McTiernan, director. Joel Silver, producer. Postponed. Steven de Souza is rewriting script.

The Shadow. Movie. Script: Howard Franklin. Martin Bregman, producer. "Unlikely."

* **The She-Hulk**. Character to be introduced in Hulk TV movie.

The Silver Surfer. Animated mini-series in works. New World.

* **Spider-Man**. Cannon Films version. Albert Pyun, director. Scheduled to be in production. Animated Spider-Man segments part of *Marvel Universe*.

* **Sub-Mariner**. Movie. Supposedly still alive at New World Pictures.

* **Superboy**. Half-hour syndicated TV series continues. (see article)

Superman. Cannon Films has announced a *Superman V. Not* a "certainty." Animated series from Ruby-Spears.

* **Swamp Thing**. Movie, *Return of the Swamp Thing*. (see item)

* **Tales from the Crypt**. HBO Cable series pilot. Other episodes reportedly in works.

* **Tarzan**. New TV movie to air on CBS, *Tarzan in Manhattan*. Stars Joe Lara.

Thor. Spin-off series (from *Hulk* TV movie sequel) unsold. Animated series in development.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**. Animated series airing nationwide. Live-action film being scripted by Bobby Herbeck.

* **Time Beavers**. Animated TV series. Kushner-Locke Productions.

Tin-Tin. Movie "on back burner" at Amblin.

Trouble with Girls. Movie. Producer TBA (see article).

* **V for Vendetta**. Joel Silver, producer.

* **WARP**. Script by Mark Victor & Michael Grais, producers.

Watchmen. Movie. Script: Sam Hamm. Joel Silver, producer.

Whisper. Movie. Developed by Atlantic Releasing to star Vanity.

The Wizard of Id. Movie. Script: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen, David & Jerry Zucker to direct.

* **Wolverine**. Movie. Reportedly still alive at New World Pictures.

* **The X-Men**. Animated TV series pilot from New World. Available on videocassette.

Zippyvision. Movie. Script: Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin. Featuring Zippy the Pinhead.

Zorro. Half-hour TV series, *Zorro—The Legend Continues*, co-produced by New World Enterprises & France's Ellipse Programme.

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